

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 1965

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. D. E. Nicholson, Murrumba) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS

GERIATRICS WARD, TOWNSVILLE
GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Aikens, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

With reference to his Answer to my Question on September 29, will all the facilities and methods of treatment provided in the geriatrics ward, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane, be installed in and/or made available in the proposed new geriatrics ward, Townsville General Hospital, and, if not, why not?

Answer:—

“The Townsville Hospitals Board proposes that one floor of the new multi-storied ward block to be built as the second stage of its expansion scheme for Townsville Hospital be used as a geriatrics ward. It has not yet submitted detailed plans showing the facilities and services it desires included in this ward. The Townsville Hospital has a social worker and departments of occupational therapy and physiotherapy and they will be available to patients in the geriatrics ward. The provision of any additional services and facilities which may be necessary for the treatment of these patients will be given consideration when the Board submits its detailed plans in due course.”

EXTENSION OF HOURS, SANDGATE MEDICAL CLINIC

Mr. Dean, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

As doctors' fees are to be increased for medical attention in the home and as this will cause a higher attendance of people seeking free medical services at the Sandgate clinic, will he consider extending the present hours at the clinic to meet the increased demand?

Answer:—

"I have been informed by the chairman of the Hospitals Board that the question of extending the hours at the Sandgate Clinic will be considered by the Board if and when the necessity arises."

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION OF BURDEKIN RIVER SYSTEM

Mr. Coburn, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) Has he seen the report published in the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* of November 13, 1965, of the meeting of representatives of five North Queensland Local Authorities held at Ayr on November 12, 1965, where it was decided to ask the State Government to combine with the Commonwealth Government in a complete economic and geographical survey to ascertain the potential of the Burdekin River system?

(2) If so, will he inform the House, in as great detail as possible, of the results of the extensive investigations by a special committee appointed by the Government since the rejection by the Commonwealth Government of the Burdekin Dam Project as recommended in the Kemp Report of 1951?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "The proposal in the article referred to that the State and Commonwealth combine in a complete economic and geographical survey of the Burdekin River system indicates a lack of awareness of the co-operation and co-ordination of activities as between State and Commonwealth that are already in existence. This application of joint resources is active in a variety of directions, and whilst the steady flow of information being obtained might not of itself make spectacular headlines, I can give every assurance that it is a basic necessity to bring about the conversion of a potential to a sound reality. I would make particular mention of the following investigations being undertaken:—(a) Preparation of resources maps through the assistance of the Department of National Development; (b) Broad scale land system mapping through the agency of the C.S.I.R.O.; (c) An economic

investigation of land development in the Belyando-Suttor region by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; (d) Detailed land classification of the Upper Burdekin area based on vegetation; (e) The investigation of soil conditions and water resources by the Department of Primary Industries and the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission; (f) Research into land use with its particular application to tropical pastures. The Honourable Member can rest assured that my Government will continue this active co-operation with the Commonwealth Government in vigorously pursuing these investigations which are such a basic preliminary ingredient for the sound economic development of the Burdekin area."

CONSIDERATION BY BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL OF TOWN PLAN AND WILBUR SMITH REPORT

Mr. Hughes, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to a report in the metropolitan press that Brisbane City Council will not meet to consider the Town Plan or the Wilbur Smith Report until February, 1966?

(2) Has any progress been made by Brisbane City Council in making the initial decisions relating to the Wilbur Smith Report?

(3) Should Brisbane City Council continue the delay, will he consider ways to encourage Brisbane City Council to take urgent action to solve any immediate problem preventing progressive action being taken to overcome the threat of traffic chaos in the city?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "The Honourable Member should direct this Question to the Brisbane City Council."

(3) "Yes."

GOVERNMENT AID TO NON-STATE EDUCATION

Mr. Hughes, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to statements by leading Liberal Members of the Federal Government upholding aid to non-State schools?

(2) Will he give details of the form, manner and extent of aid granted to non-State schools in Queensland by this Government?

(3) Will he consider a request to the Federal Government for additional grants to Queensland for the purpose of further assisting education in Queensland State and non-State schools?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "Government aid to non-State education in the main takes the form of assistance to parents of students attending those schools. This is set out in detail below. Allowances towards tuition fees: (a) On behalf of scholars attending approved non-State schools, allowances towards tuition fees at the rate of £18 a year are paid by the Department of Education to the Principal of the school, subject to the following conditions:—(i) Students are in grades 8, 9 or 10; (ii) They undertake an approved secondary school course; (iii) Their conduct, progress and attendance are satisfactory; (iv) The parents are domiciled within the State. (b) On behalf of scholars attending approved non-State schools who at one and the same Junior Examination have passed in at least five subjects, allowances towards tuition fees at the rate of £20 a year are paid by the Department of Education to the Principal of the school, subject to the following conditions: (i) Students undertake an approved Post-Junior course; (ii) Their conduct, progress and attendance are satisfactory; (iii) The parents are domiciled within the State. The total cost to the Government of these allowances towards tuition fees in 1964-65 was £479,716. Living Allowances: Living allowances as stated below are granted to students at both State and approved non-State secondary schools if the income of their parents does not exceed the basic wage plus £50 for each child entirely dependent, or an amount equal to one-fifth of the basic wage per member of family entirely dependent on such income, whichever is the greater. To qualify for this allowance in grades 11 and 12 a student must also have passed in at least five subjects at one sitting of the Junior Examination. (a) Students who must live away from home to attend a secondary school are granted an allowance as under—Grades 8, 9 and 10—£65 a year; Grade 11—£82 a year; Grade 12—£104 a year. (b) Students who can live at home and attend a secondary school are granted an allowance as under—Grades 8, 9 and 10—£16 a year; Grades 11 and 12—£20 a year; The total cost of living allowances paid to students in non-State schools in 1964-65 was £50,664. Costs of Transport: Students attending non-State schools enjoy the same privileges with regard to free travel or concessions when travelling to and from school as do students attending State schools. Government aid to schools takes many forms. Subsidy is provided on a number of items. A £ for £ subsidy to a maximum of £122 10s. is available, for example, for the purchase of film projectors. Radiograms are also subsidized on this basis.

School requisites for non-State schools may now be ordered under State Stores contracts direct from firms to individual schools. Non-State schools may borrow films from the Departmental film library. Costs of transport of films and film-strips to non-State schools are borne by the Department of Education. Non-State schools may receive advice and guidance from Departmental Inspectors and Guidance Staff. Their teachers are frequently invited to attend special lectures and refresher courses. Their students may avail themselves of the special facilities provided for educational and vocational guidance at the Department's Research and Guidance Branch. To help meet the running costs of Grammar Schools throughout the State the Government makes an annual grant at present amounting to £82,200. In addition, Grammar Schools have been permitted to borrow from Treasury Loan Funds for capital works and improvements. These borrowings attract a Government subsidy of 40 per cent. Under the Grammar Schools Acts Amendment Act of 1962, Grammar Schools are now empowered to borrow money by way of debentures or guaranteed loan as well as from the Treasury. In the *Statement of Needs* compiled by the Australian Education Council, which comprises the Ministers for Education of all States, the Federal Government has already been requested to make additional money available to the States for education purposes. The special grants made by the Commonwealth Government for the expansion of technical and technological education have helped tremendously in providing much improved facilities in these fields. The current special Commonwealth Government grants to State and non-State schools for the provision of special science laboratories and science equipment will greatly improve the facilities for the teaching of Science in all Queensland schools. Obviously any further assistance which would improve and extend educational opportunities for Queensland students would be most welcome."

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—

The Milk Supply Acts, 1952 to 1961.

The Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1965.

The Soil Conservation Act of 1965.

The Wheat Pool Acts, 1920 to 1957.

Regulations under—

The Meat Industry Act of 1965.

The Sugar Experiment Stations Acts, 1900 to 1965.

STAMP ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Hooper, Greenslopes, in the chair)

Debate resumed from 19 November (see p. 1726) on clause 4—Amendment of s. 39 (1); Provisions for use of adhesive stamps on bills and notes—

Mr. HUGHES (Kurilpa) (11.23 a.m.): I have criticised this provision in the Bill on a number of previous occasions, so that it is hardly necessary for me to speak on it in detail at this stage. I oppose the increase from 3d. to 6d. in the stamp duty on cheques. My disapproval of this increase has been consistent. I consider it to be a savage impost which will adversely affect the average working man and woman in this State. The Treasurer, in his reply at the second-reading stage, said, ". . . it really surprises me that these points . . ."—he was referring to the increase in stamp duties—"were not raised at all in the course of the Budget debate." He also said, ". . . it is surprising that no-one said anything about the changes that were being made on the revenue side in any detail." I respectfully remind him that I have spoken in opposition to any increase in stamp duty on the floor of this Chamber as well as in other places.

Mr. Davies: You aren't genuine.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member for Maryborough says I am not genuine in my protest. Hon. members should know me sufficiently well to realise that I debate in a forthright manner, not with my tongue in my cheek. I apply myself sincerely to my duties, and I speak with conviction.

In particular, in the Budget debate I made a point of opposing the rise in detail and I quote a portion of my speech as recorded in "Hansard" No. 8 of Tuesday, 19 October, at pages 953 and 954, when I said—

"There is one item in the Financial Statement on which I cannot find any ground for agreement with the Treasurer. Of course, it may be that I am not always right. He said—

'In addition, in anticipation of the decimal change, stamp duty on cheques will be lifted to 6d. (5c) as from 1 December, 1965. There will be a generous period allowed for the use of cheque books in current use. This charge will yield an additional £413,000 this financial year, and £704,000 in a full year.'

"I am somewhat in sympathy with the little people in our community on this matter. Today, to facilitate domestic budgeting, many ordinary people in the community use cheque accounts. This has been brought about largely as a result of the improvement in our standard of living.

"To facilitate domestic transactions, with the higher standard of living in the community the great majority of people use cheque accounts to settle their financial

affairs. I emphasise that the use of cheque accounts is not restricted to large businesses or monopolistic companies. The increase in the tax on cheques is a 'slug' on the small people. There are other ways in which the Government could obtain finance, namely, by increasing State development and thereby the population. This would be reflected in our tax reimbursements. That would be a constructive means of raising money rather than by taxing the little man."

I again opposed the measure at the introductory stage of the Bill, and again at the second-reading stage. That proves the tenacity, continued persistence, and consistency of my opposition.

I contend that we should remove irksome small taxes and think big. We should finance remissions of duties, not by savage increases in the tax on cheques, but by developing our State by helping more business people to settle here, thus assisting our economy and entitling the Government to a larger reimbursement of Federal income tax.

Mr. Davies: Your voice lacks sincerity.

Mr. HUGHES: I believe that the rights of one's conscience must be exercised, and I have never yet been challenged that I lack sincerity.

I believe that the increased tax will directly affect most city and country housewives, workers, business people, and farmers, and will indirectly affect everyone else by an increase in overhead expenses, which in turn will increase prices, particularly of the necessities of life and consumer goods. It may not result in a significant increase in prices, but I feel that we should concentrate on instituting measures consistent with our principles of free enterprise and democracy, which will assist in halting price rises.

It is inevitable that there will be some considerable effects on householding budgeting. It is an accepted, convenient, and modern practice to pay accounts by cheque. However, with the passing of this Bill it will become a costly practice because it will cost 6d. duty, plus 6d. bank charges, plus 5d. postage if the cheque is posted. I believe that the increase in duty is exorbitant.

I am fortified in this belief because I have sought the views of ever so many people on this matter in the electorate which I represent, and also private persons, businessmen, and bankers. Only yesterday I was speaking to the director of the Kurilpa child care centre about the method of payment of child-minding fees, as a reflection of the general effect this increase may have on people in all walks of life. That body received yesterday eight cheques in payment of child-minding fees. Many of those cheques came from widows and deserted wives, because payment by cheque is an accepted means of household accounting these days. For private accounts, small businesses, tradesmen, and farmers, it will become a costly means of effecting their transactions.

Throughout the term of my public life I have championed the cause of the little man, the housewife, the worker, and the small businessman, and I am dedicated to this course of action. I know my colleagues share my view, because that is the way we think. That is the way we try not only to effect economies, but also to improve our standard of living and aid the development of the State.

There are some aspects of the Bill which are quite good and which remit certain benefits in certain ways to some people. But I would rather see stamp duties remain unaltered than bring about this impost of a 100 per cent. increase in a tax which I declare affects particularly the family man and the housewife.

Mr. Chinchin: Where will the Government get three-quarters of a million from?

Mr. HUGHES: It may be asked where three-quarters of a million pounds is to come from. I say that in these matters we should not tax the little people; rather should we think big and do more to entice even more development to the State. As a result, it would then be possible to grant remissions of duty in other ways without taxing the budget of the ordinary household. It can be said that had we gone about the brigalow lands development scheme in some other way, it may have been possible to receive grants from the Commonwealth Government instead of having to use State money for redemption of loans for the building of certain roads. However, I cannot pursue that matter now because there are so many facets to it.

I have spoken at length on the Bill, and as I covered all aspects of it earlier in the debate I will not reiterate the many viewpoints that I have expressed. Nevertheless, I have a proposal to advance on the conversion to decimal currency. Why not leave the matter well alone, and simply convert the present duty of 3d. to 3 cents, which is the equivalent of 3.6d. of the existing currency? That will produce additional revenue without seriously affecting the people. One State of Australia has seen fit to adopt such a measure; the Government of New South Wales is likely simply to increase cheque stamp duty to 4d.

As a general rule, I have found the Country-Liberal Government cognisant of the needs of the average family man; he has not been burdened with heavy or undue taxes. However, I find that the proposal to increase duty from 3d. to 6d. on frequently used domestic facilities is an exception, and a departure from Government practice. I voice opposition to it, and I shall be voting against this clause. The Government parties are aware of my views and my course of action. The Government will not lose the vote, and my action will not bring it down; but it does demonstrate the virility of the Liberal Party when a member is able to speak and vote according to his conscience.

Mr. Sherrington: What about Labour?

Mr. HUGHES: This is in contrast to the socialist Labour members, who must vote as they are directed by their bosses—the Left Wing element of the Trades Hall and the Q.C.E. That is a recognised fact. I vote as my conscience dictates, and, as my action amply demonstrates, all on this side of the Chamber are able to do that. What I propose to do, and how I feel about this matter, is no secret to the Government parties.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. HUGHES: There is ample evidence that A.L.P. members are gagged, because I have never seen any of them take a similar course of action; almost invariably they are in agreement on matters discussed in this Assembly. When the Bill dealing with the fluoridation of water supplies was before us, we had the spectacle of members of the Labour Party speaking in favour of it and, when the time came, voting against it. I cherish the right to vote as my conscience dictates, and I shall act accordingly.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (11.34 a.m.): I am prompted to rise because of an interjection from the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt during the speech of the hon. member for Kurilpa. In passing, I may mention that apparently the conscience of the hon. member for Kurilpa is pricking him. That must apply also to some of his colleagues, because I am sure that they feel as he does on this steep increase.

The hon. member for Mt. Gravatt seems anxious to know where additional revenue could be obtained to the extent of £750,000; he said "three-quarters of a million". The hon. member may have heard here the other day a long statement by the Minister for Mines, which sounded more like a speech made at the introductory stage of a Bill. In it reference was made to a proposal to impose a royalty of 10 per cent. on oil produced offshore.

It is no good saying that these matters belong to the days when the Labour Government entered into an agreement about 40 years ago. A new field is being tapped, but apparently the Government is not interested in exploring it. Instead, it is paying attention to the instrument known as a cheque, which, as I think the Treasurer knows without any hon. member in this Chamber emphasising it, is a fairly good means of recording expenditure and is of assistance in accounting.

I think the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt was a member of this Assembly when the Government parties approved of the elimination of the tax that was imposed by the Treasurer on the equities on Crown leases. The hon. member for Kurilpa was correct in saying that quite a number of concessions have been introduced by the Government under the Stamp Duties Act. In my opinion, it would have been better to continue those duties instead of providing for this savage increase in the stamp duty on cheques.

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer) (11.36 a.m.): I have listened carefully to the argument on this clause. It presents no new line of argument to that adduced at the second-reading stage.

I remind the Committee that, with the exception of the State of New South Wales, what the Government is now proposing is the accepted Australian standard. In New South Wales the present level of stamp duty is 4d., and the question of whether it will go from 4d. to 4 cents when the conversion is made to decimal currency is unanswered as yet. If it does go to 4 cents, there will be very little difference between that and this Government's proposal to make it 5 cents.

The additional revenue that will flow from the 6d. is the source of two important concessions: the concession on stamp duty on receipts will be doubled; the mortgage duty on the matrimonial home will be forgiven, as a completely new principle. If it is argued that the effect of increasing the stamp duty on cheques will be wide, I point out that so also will be the effect of the proposed concessions.

In Victoria, where a stamp duty of 6d. on each cheque has been in force for over 12 months, there has not been, as I indicated earlier, to my surprise, any falling off in the volume of cheque transactions or any important movement away from trading banks to the savings banks. They were the two things that my experience told me would happen initially. When neither of them occurred, I was prepared to recommend the Bill to the Parliament.

If the clause is lost, the concessions also are lost. If the 6d. is lost the Government cannot possibly go ahead with the Bill because the Committee will have destroyed the source from which the concessions come.

Mr. Walsh: In other words, you will withdraw the Bill?

Mr. HILEY: The Government could not proceed with it.

Mr. Walsh: That would make history.

Mr. HILEY: The Government accepts that the long-term answer is development. Although development is rewarding in the long run, the early effect of development on the finances of the State is to add to its burdens very considerably. The benefit that comes from development becomes evident over a long period, but the demands for housing and all the other services that the Government is called upon to provide are immediate. One of the problems confronting the Government at present is that, because so much development is occurring, pressure on its budgetary resources is greater than it has ever been. Although I say to the Committee frankly that I do not regret this one bit, I say to it, "What is the alternative? Are we to go back to stagnation and have fewer budgetary troubles but no development?" I think it is far better

that the State should endure some discomfort if, in the long run, development occurs that will be really rewarding to the State.

Mention was made that if the brigalow lands development scheme had been handled differently it might have been possible to give some relief, and brigalow roads were referred to specifically. There must be some misapprehension in the mind of the hon. member for Kurilpa, because all the brigalow roads are built with money provided by the Commonwealth Government. Not one penny of State money is used for that purpose.

I repeat that this Bill presents a mixture of added burdens, which after due inquiry we are satisfied have been safely accepted where tried in another State, and, in equity, important concessions. As a matter of fact, with the solitary exception of New South Wales the proposed duty is now the accepted Australian standard. So far as the Queensland public as a whole are concerned, the two very important concessions in the Bill are made possible by this increase in duty.

Question—That clause 4, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 36

Anderson
Armstrong
Beardmore
Bjelke-Petersen
Camm
Campbell
Carey
Chalk
Chinchen
Delamothé
Fletcher
Gaven
Harrison
Herbert
Hiley
Hodges
Houghton
Jones, V. E.
Knox
Lee

Lickiss
McKechnie
Müller
Munro
Murray
Nicklin
Pilbeam
Pizzey
Richter
Row
Smith
Tooth
Wharton
Windsor

Tellers:

Cory
Ramsden

NOES, 25

Bromley
Byrne
Davies
Dean
Donald
Dufficy
Duggan
Graham
Hanlon
Hanson
Houston
Hughes
Inch
Jones, R.

Lloyd
Mann
Melloy
Newton
O'Donnell
Sherrington
Tucker
Wallis-Smith
Walsh

Tellers:

Marsden
Thackeray

PAIRS

Hewitt
Ewan

Baxter
Bennett

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 5 to 7, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

SUPPLY

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—
THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH ALLOTTED
DAYS

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Hooper,
Greenslopes, in the chair)

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1965-66

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS

CHIEF OFFICE

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—
Minister for Lands) (11.48 a.m.): I move—
“That £852,700 be granted for ‘Depart-
ment of Lands—Chief Office.’”

This appropriation is less than last year's owing to the fact that less finance is required for reclamation schemes this year. Work at Cairns and Mackay has progressed to the stage where works involving the heaviest expenditure have now been completed, and for the time being it is not practical or, I think, wise to extend either of these schemes. Enough land has now been reclaimed to meet the residential and industrial requirements of those two cities for some time to come.

In discussing these Estimates, I should like to make reference to one or two of the more important aspects of our land administration. Hon. members already have available to them a copy of the annual report of the Land Administration Commission. That report sets out main points of interest concerning the Land Administration Commission, the Survey Office and the Rural Fires Board.

Of course, the savage drought which has prevailed in most parts of the State has adversely affected the operations of my department. This temporary setback is particularly true in the case of the Fitzroy River Basin Land Development Scheme and our land settlement activities generally. The drought continues to hang on, and until such time as good general rains are received we must slow down the settlement of our new primary producers. In addition, the land-owner whose area is to be reduced must be afforded a reasonable and ample opportunity of reducing stock numbers under circumstances more favourable than at present.

Drought conditions have led to serious setbacks, as I said before, in the Fitzroy River Basin Land Development Scheme. It is most unfortunate that these conditions arose at this particular stage of this scheme. The early establishment of new producers is always a difficult problem in itself, but these difficulties have been magnified this year by the lack of rain. In fact, drought conditions have slowed down for almost two years the establishment of new pastures. This has had the effect of worsening, to a considerable degree, the sucker regrowth problem which, in turn, will add to developmental

costs. Dry conditions on certain blocks have given rise to serious regrowth problems, and this has required us to take special action by spraying suckers from the air with hormones. This is a new departure for the department. It is too early yet to assess the final results, but present indications give reasonable cause for optimism as to the final kill of suckers. Nevertheless, even if it is successful, it will result in delay and added costs of development for the settlers.

An Opposition Member: What material are you using for the spray?

Mr. FLETCHER: We are using 2,4,5-T.

To date, we have not lost any new settlers as a direct result of the drought, but without doubt the adverse seasonal conditions will make things much more difficult for them and the effectiveness of the over-all project must suffer. Fortunately, the care exercised in the selection of good men, and our firmness, in the face of stiff opposition, of selecting only those who possessed reasonable capital and experience are now paying off and the scheme as such has a better chance of overcoming this adversity. We have found it necessary to make allowances for hardship in these circumstances and have decided to ease the terms of repayments of loans during the initial three-year period to assist the new settlers during early establishment so as to allow them to make the best use of their own private capital.

In spite of dry conditions, however, progress is remarkably good. The seasons have at least favoured the work of road construction and at the end of the financial year approximately £1,000,000 had been expended from the Special Developmental Fund on road construction works. The Main Roads Department has completed 43 miles of new main road and is currently constructing a further 28 miles. It is mentioned that the Special Brigalow Scheme Fund finances road construction on main roads to all-weather gravel standard but then Main Roads funds are used for the bitumen sealing of these main roads. At the end of the financial year the Banana, Bauhinia and Duaringa shires had completed 44 miles of new council roads and about 145 miles were under construction. Finance for these works is found from the scheme on the basis that 25 per cent. of the cost of the road is repayable by the particular council as a long-term Treasury loan. In effect, all capital for these council roads is found from the Special Brigalow Scheme Fund.

Progress with developmental works on blocks has been fairly satisfactory. It is important to remember that there are three types of holding in the area. Firstly, there is the retention block, and by that I mean the holding retained by the original landholder. The leases of these retention areas are all subject to developmental conditions requiring fencing, timber treatment, establishment of pasture, etc., in order that the productivity of those lands may be brought

up to the standard envisaged by the scheme. The cost of this development is not financed out of scheme funds.

The second type of holding is the auction block, which again is subject to developmental conditions to ensure its development, and again this is financed out of private capital, not from our scheme funds. The third type of holding is the block made available to new settlers and the development of that block is financed out of scheme funds in conjunction with the new settlers' private capital.

In respect of the latter-type holdings, a total area of about 206,000 acres of scrub has been pulled at a cost of approximately £283,000, and an area of about 160,000 acres has been sown to grasses at a cost of approximately £112,000. About 331 miles of fencing has been completed, and 59 tanks, with a total excavated capacity of 585,000 cubic yards, have been put down. In addition, 18 dip and yards have been completed, and a considerable quantity of fencing material and grass seed has been purchased.

All in all, and in spite of adverse seasonal conditions, reasonably quick progress has been and is being made. The area is progressing quite rapidly, and I am confident that the over-all success of the project is assured.

Only last Friday, in company with the hon. member for Barcoo, it was my pleasure to officially open a new major road over the Carnarvon Range which will serve new blocks in the Arcadia Valley, north of Injune. This construction, together with the over-all road plan for this region, will open up a tremendous area of good-quality land in the Arcadia Valley for more intensive development and productivity. Twelve months ago, when I flew over it, it was a tremendous area of virgin scrub and some forest country, stocked with scrubber cattle not completely under control.

Mr. Thackeray: How many scrubber cattle were out there?

Mr. FLETCHER: I did not have time to count them; the plane was going too fast.

The area is now open to selectors under a scheme of financial assistance, and already the fruits of endeavour are apparent. Prior to this development the productivity of these beautiful Arcadia lands was quite negligible. Very little activity was going on and production was not high, in spite of the large cattle population. This valley has now been settled with families, substantial men of ability and personal means, who impressed me as the types who could do the job they have been given, and who have now, in addition, the advantage of the promise of scheme funds to get them on their feet as early as possible. This, in turn, is creating the atmosphere and scope for community growth already reflected in the towns of Injune and Rolleston. People in those towns have already felt the advantage of the extra business of these closer settlers.

In the implementation of this scheme we were assisted tremendously by the whole-hearted co-operation of the original landholders and the local authorities in the area. The new settlers have demonstrated their confidence in spite of the drought, which has been pretty serious—it was a grim prospect for them—by holding on. At the same time, the results obtained from those blocks which were sold at auction is a good tangible indication of public confidence in the project.

I mention that action is in hand to extend areas 1 and 2 of the scheme, and this will have the effect of increasing the number of new blocks to be made available. I am hopeful that negotiations with the Commonwealth in respect of area 3, which is that huge area of approximately 5,500,000 acres north of the Emerald railway, will lead to further expansion. A further area, the Sutor-Belyando region, is presently being examined by the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics. From my knowledge of the area and the opinions of men engaged in the investigation, I have reason to believe that this, too, will be approved for more intensive development in the near future.

Mr. O'Donnell: Is that area 3 or 4?

Mr. FLETCHER: It is more or less north and north-west of area 3. You could call it area 4.

In the field of land settlement generally, quite satisfactory progress has been made. Excluding blocks made available under the Fitzroy River Basin Land Development Scheme, 41 new living-area units with a total area of 1,371,000 acres were made available for new settlement last year. There would have been more if there had not been a drought. These were living areas and did not include the many parcels, small and large of vacant Crown land made available to applicants qualified to hold them.

Generally speaking, we have had to hold our hand in the pastoral areas because of the shocking seasonal conditions that have applied in the last 12 months. Meanwhile, the work of surveying new blocks is in hand so that early settlement can proceed when conditions change for the better. At the moment we have about 5,000,000 acres in hand for new settlement, and this will provide about 130-odd blocks for wool and beef production. I mention as a matter of interest to northern members that, arising out of my inspection of the pastoral land in the Gulf region during the year, we are introducing a new system of land disposal in cases where we think it desirable to apply this new policy.

Under present practice, new pastoral leases are made available by ballot. Generally, this system works very satisfactorily. However, in the case of the very remote lands—I am thinking now of the Gulf region and the Peninsula—special qualifications are required of a new settler if the new block

is to be brought to a stage of reasonable productivity within a reasonable time. The difficulties that new blocks in the Gulf country present are well known to all who have gone there and who know anything about the practical facts of life in outback areas. Their development is subject to many difficulties associated with distance, transport costs, shortage of skilled station labour, high cost of material, difficulty in securing stock breeders for herd establishment, to mention but a few.

Many applicants for blocks in the past have had no real personal knowledge or experience in these problems. Their inability to develop and stock these blocks is holding back production at a time when more suitable applicants are available. Too often a relatively inexperienced applicant of ordinary financial means is successful in drawing a block, whereas amongst the same group of applicants there are men who possess special experience and adequate capital—men capable of doing a job in this difficult country quickly and well.

In localities such as the Gulf region, the State can ill afford to be complacent about this wastage. There is no need for me to expound the reasons why faster northern development is something of paramount importance to Queenslanders in this day and age. To overcome the problems associated with it, in future cases where there are particular difficulties to be surmounted by the producer (generally, I am speaking of remote northern blocks) we will invite applicants to set out their developmental proposals as well as their character and history. All applications will be reviewed and the successful applicant will be selected having regard to the programme of development, his experience in the cattle industry (particularly in the area), and his financial capacity to carry out the development of the holding. He will be granted an occupation licence and, after he has occupied the land and made payment of the necessary cash deposits, he will, subject to a departmental check of his bona fides, be granted a pastoral lease over the holding. This new policy will overcome the inadequacy of the present system and will be used only in the circumstances that I have related—that is, where areas are very difficult and require special background experience.

During the year a limited number of portions situated in the wallum strip were offered to the public for development. Four blocks totalling 12,417 acres have already been leased, and a further four blocks totalling 16,840 acres have been made available for application. In addition, Tropical Cattle Pty. Ltd., a substantial company well experienced in land development, has been granted a lease over 10,500 acres of wallum type soils situated near Caloundra. These are mainly trial propositions. The wallum soils are very light, and almost all of them are deficient in certain elements and quite commonly require drainage before they can be brought into production.

A considerable amount of development has been carried out on the five blocks leased already, and we confidently expect that results from this work will hasten the build-up of knowledge and provide the techniques necessary to handle this type of soil. During the year, and arising out of expansion in the sugar industry, 34 blocks suitable for the growing of sugar-cane were made available on the basis that the successful applicants would be granted cane assignments. In addition to providing living area units, we were able to satisfy the land needs of many of the existing sugar producers who, as a result of increased assignments, required additional land.

I think it also of interest to report that the new system of making lands available for selection called the selective method of application, which we introduced at the time of the consolidation of the Land Acts, worked very well. This new system has operated since January, 1963, and is used as the method of disposal of the better quality lands, particularly the mixed farming blocks. In terms of this method, all applications are examined by a committee of review composed of three members, two of whom are primary producers well versed in the type of primary production that is proposed and the other a representative of my department. The conditions of application are now published, and any rejected applicant has the right to appear in person before the committee to further his claims for admittance to the ballot. I think the new method is a big step forward on the old group system that it replaced, and I have been freed from that considerable volume of complaint that seemed inevitably to follow every ballot under the old system.

Summarising our land settlement activities, I think we can safely say that much has been achieved in spite of the dry times.

On the whole, the development of Crown lands has progressed at a very encouraging rate. Throughout the length and breadth of Queensland the work of the destruction of useless timber and the sowing of improved pasture has been tremendous in volume. This applies particularly in the case of the brigalow and gidyea scrub regions, the speargrass country, the coastal forests and the forest flats of Central and South-eastern Queensland. In the handier grazing areas there has been an upsurge in the work of bringing scrub areas under cultivation for cash and fodder crops. I am sure that all members representing country electorates have recognised this increased tempo in land development.

Most landholders themselves recognise the need for investment in the development of their holdings. Taxation laws are very favourable in this respect. We encourage, and where necessary enforce, this development through lease conditions. As leases are renewed, either wholly or partly, we are careful to check on the present state of development of the land in question and

impose developmental conditions on the renewed lease as a reminder to the landholder of his obligations in this respect. In the main, these basic conditions are more than met. Seldom are we faced with the need to take a firm stand; but in those cases where we have not been satisfied, appropriate action has been taken and our requirements have been complied with.

We have tightened up our attitude somewhat in the case of the sale of a new lease where developmental conditions have not reasonably been complied with. In the normal case, a transfer will not now be allowed until conditions have been met. We require the settler to re-submit the matter after he has met his obligations. I am sure the wisdom of this attitude is apparent and recognised.

A further impetus to land development is the availability of better land tenures than formerly. The primary producer today can get conversion of his lease to freehold with 30 years to pay for his land, free of interest. The effect of this is that he can freeze his land value for 30 years at the determined purchase price and pay off that price in 30 equal annual instalments. His annual instalment of purchase money at 3.3 per cent. is not much more than a normal rental and he has the advantage of freedom from rental re-appraisal every 10 years. This, in my opinion, gives him the perfect basis for investment in development. He knows his financial commitment and he is free of that uncertainty, in some cases an unreasonable uncertainty, of the loss of land and the loss of his developmental investment. Whether or not he elects to convert does not appear to him so important as the knowledge that if he wishes to do so the right is available to him.

Further reasons for the increased tempo of land development are the important modifications made to the land laws at the time of consolidation, which put to rest for all time that long-standing criticism voiced by so many primary producers that timber treatment, be it scrub-pulling or ring-barking, was not an improvement to be paid for when, on the expiration of a lease, land passed from the old to the new tenant. We have had no trouble with this new basis.

The lessee of a holding in the last 10 years of its lease is now prepared to continue with the work of development in the knowledge that he will now be compensated to a reasonable degree for any developmental work carried out on any land that he may lose. The uncertainty of the old situation has been removed. In our experience, the new tenant, under the new basis, has been quite willing to pay for the clearing costs of his land as assessed, for reasons that are patently obvious to the practical man. The new system is fairer to all and is in the best interests of the State. The new policy has paid dividends.

One of the main tragedies of the drought is that there is a possibility that the severity of the dry will tend to slow down this general trend to the best use of land, particularly in those districts where usage is swinging rapidly away from pure grazing on the natural grasses to the establishment of introduced pastures and, where practical, the growing of crops to be sold as grain or walked off as prime beef or mutton.

Last year, following an expenditure of approximately £232,000 in reclamation work and road construction, we sold approximately 1,080 residential allotments under free-holding tenure. At the same time 685 allotments were set apart for the purpose of the State Housing Acts. This year we will spend approximately £328,000 in the provision of residential, business and industrial sites in about 30 localities scattered throughout Queensland. The reclamation scheme at East Cairns has been completed to the first stage and this has provided land ideally suited to the needs of secondary industry. Part of this former swamp has already been leased for industrial purposes, and another area has been made available for the bulk sugar terminal.

Reclamation works at Mackay have progressed satisfactorily, and the first batch of residential allotments has been made available to the public.

Another important activity of the department is the control of noxious weeds. In the biological control of lantana we have already released insects of three varieties in the main lantana-infested areas of the State. A certain measure of success has been achieved with them, but it does appear that further work is required before we can claim success in this field. Here again, I think the drought is militating against success. During the year there was a very important development in that we reached agreement with the Commonwealth and New South Wales for an increase in the work of controlling lantana by a combination of resources aimed at testing some of the more promising insects released in Hawaii. We have had very encouraging reports from Hawaii about some sort of break-through in the control of this pest by insects. Under this project the work of study of the various types of lantana plants found in Australia is well under way by a biologist from the Department of Primary Industries.

Early in 1966 this officer will proceed to America to carry out investigations of these plants in their natural habitat. Meanwhile, C.S.I.R.O. will undertake the study of insect control in Hawaii, and following that study the biological section of my department at Sherwood will proceed with investigations following the overseas work. To facilitate this joint project, we constructed at Sherwood during the year a new glasshouse insectory to ensure that the advantages of a joint approach are not lost, and so that Queensland will be well to the fore in taking any advantage which may accrue from

this project. I feel confident that something worth while will come from new developments in this field.

In the case of noogoora burr we have released two insects, one from America and the other from India. In both cases extreme drought conditions have severely prejudiced the chances of establishment of these beetles, and it is difficult to give an assessment at this stage of the degree of success we are likely to obtain from them. At the moment I doubt that these insects are finding anything at all to eat. Work with them will continue, but I suspect that considerable further work will be required before we can claim to have the answer.

During the year we pressed on with the work of clearing *Harrisia* cactus from the Collinsville district. This cactus still remains a major problem in that it spreads so easily and is so difficult to kill. We certainly are not entirely satisfied with the over-all situation, and I have arranged to visit Collinsville early next month to review our year's operations. I am not very happy with our progress there, although no doubt we have made progress. We are still carrying on a considerable volume of investigation work to find a more satisfactory destructive agent. As they become available all new poisons are exhaustively tested, but to date our requirements have not been satisfied.

The Co-ordinating Board reports that last year 69 simultaneous schemes were introduced for the destruction of noxious weeds, including noogoora burr and Bathurst burr. The board reports that the control of noxious plants is being well maintained, and work carried out by landholders is generally satisfactory. I think I can say from my personal experience that these simultaneous schemes have been of tremendous advantage to Queensland. Marked progress was achieved during the year in the destruction of groundsel bush, particularly in the case of vacant Crown lands from Maryborough to the New South Wales border. It is a rather expensive business, but is important enough to warrant the degree of expenditure incurred. During the year considerable work was carried out in the destruction of seed beds along the coastal strip and on some of the coastal highlands. At the same time experimental work in the destruction of groundsel on hill-sides in the West Cooroy district and the sowing of land with tropical legumes and pasture grasses brought to the attention of landholders in the area a satisfactory and economic method of coping with groundsel infestation.

It was a very good idea to introduce pasture grasses and legumes where the groundsel had previously taken over. The interest in the area has shown the value of what we have done. The annual report of the board sets out in detail the tremendous amount of work carried out during the year on weed control throughout the State.

The Rabbit Control Authority which was recently constituted has made good progress in reducing the rabbit population. Eight poisoning plants are fully operative and are working in the area between Goondiwindi on the west and the Great Dividing Range on the east. In addition to these poisoning operations, field units have been established and have been engaged in a campaign of the continuous inoculation of rabbits with myxoma virus. Two inoculation campaigns in the Dalby, Cunnamulla, Charleville and St. George districts were carried out by staff of the biological section in conjunction with landholders in those districts. This also is a difficult proposition during a drought since the myxoma virus depends for its spread—or transportation—on mosquitoes, and at the moment mosquitoes are in pretty short supply in most of our rabbit areas. Considering the short time this authority has been in operation, I think it is to be congratulated on its achievements. Worthy of particular mention is the willing co-operation extended by landholders generally. Without this, of course, the authority could not hope to be effective. This is the intelligent approach to be expected from landholders, for if they can get rid of the rabbits they will reap tremendous benefit.

Some few weeks ago, on Tuen Plains in the Cunnamulla district, for the first time in Australia aerial baiting with "one-shot oats" for the control of rabbits was carried out over an experimental area of 500 acres. The kill was 75 per cent. I know that it is not possible to identify every single rabbit and to be quite sure of the percentage killed, but the experts who run the poisoning campaign are experts on rabbits, and their methods are well tested and fairly reliable. They consider that this one shot, which involves only the one poisoning instead of the old system of pre-feeding and then poisoning, is justified and should be carried on. "One-shot oats" is specially prepared by impregnating oats with 1080 poison, and one such oat grain is a lethal dose for a rabbit. The oats are mixed in the proportion of one of the poisoned grains to 100 grains without any poison and we rely on the rabbits eating enough to get a lethal dose. I was a little worried that we might have killed the birds in the area. However, careful observation over a four-week period indicated—and this is rather important in my view—that no bird had been poisoned in the locality despite the presence of many thousands of galahs and other species.

Mr. Aikens: It would be a good idea to sprinkle a few grains around here.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am afraid I cannot supply any. It is completely under control. I could not even bring any for inspection to the Chamber. There are literally thousands of galahs and other birds who would be affected by eating poisoned grain, but not one instance was recorded.

In its work of mapping, the Survey Office has been extremely busy. There has been a tremendous upsurge in land transactions consistent with the present trend of increased development, and the staff of the Survey Office has been hard pressed to keep up with demands of the public as well as the demands of the many departments of State involved in developmental planning. Although we have refurnished the Survey Office and provided modern equipment, and in spite of the considerably increased staff recruitment, the office is finding difficulty in keeping up with the demand. It was only to be expected that following the freeholding programme, the subdivisional programme, and the general land activity all over Queensland, tremendous demands would have been made on the Survey Office. This is understandable when one considers the great increase in the work of mapping and surveying.

Our own developmental projects, particularly the Fitzroy River Basin Land Development Scheme, and the various areas which we presently have under investigation, have alone placed a strain on the Survey Office. In addition, the requirements of the Irrigation and Water Supply Department in the planning of irrigation areas, the Main Roads Department, and the new Moura-Gladstone railway, to mention but a few, are all associated with urgent survey and mapping requirements, and these demands must be expeditiously met. I expect that during the current year re-organisation of the Survey Office will become necessary in order to maintain the speed at which demands are met.

Close liaison in mapping programmes and techniques has been maintained with the Commonwealth and other States through the National Mapping Council.

In the field of rural fire control, it is a tragic fact that because of the lack of grass most of the State is facing a non-hazardous fire season. However, the inevitable sequence of events will follow when good seasons return at a time of light stock numbers. We may confidently expect a return to higher fire hazards in rural areas and for this reason it is essential that bush fire brigades be maintained active and well equipped to meet these circumstances when they do arise, as they most certainly will.

The Rural Fires Board employs three inspectors, one in each division of the State, who continually patrol brigade areas giving all the advice and encouragement necessary to ensure that bush brigades are kept alive and efficient. As a result of the work of the board and its inspectors, most of the closely settled areas of the State are now covered by bush fire brigades and a good many of these are surprisingly well organised and very well equipped. However, I would be misinforming the Committee if I were to suggest an attitude of complacency in this matter.

One of the board's achievements of note during the year was its success in bringing about a greater measure of control over cane fires, particularly where the cane to be burned is situated on the fringe of the heavy scrubs and rain forests of the North. Once these fires move into the hills large areas of scrub are destroyed. Regrowth followed by more fire and heavy rain paves the way for erosion, with the resultant siltation of rivers and streams. Laxity in the handling of cane fires has thus robbed us of valuable timber stands and created very real flood mitigation problems that are very difficult and costly of solution.

The story of the Pioneer Valley, in the Mackay district, well illustrates the point. The Rural Fires Board, in co-operation with a well-organised sugar industry, took steps to safeguard against this by providing safeguards in permits for fires in these cases and this is achieving the desired results.

Recent reports indicate that in the Cairns-Mossman area the early signs of a problem are beginning to appear. Investigations show that although cane farmers are in the main observing requirements, unauthorised fires are sufficient in their extent to create that situation where erosion is following the destruction of forests. The local people were sufficiently concerned to have convened a public meeting in Cairns for this evening so that the matter may be examined. Our inspector will attend that gathering and, following consideration of his report, early action will be taken to ensure that flood problems are arrested at their source by protecting the rain forests from indiscriminate burning and the breakaway fire. In this year of drought rain forests are particularly vulnerable, and it would be a crying shame and a reproach if all possible steps were not taken to protect them from the hazard of fire.

I have been fortunate in the calibre of the officers who have guided and assisted me with the support that men of their type are so able to give. Their loyalty is beyond question, and their helpfulness and willingness to work all sorts of hours to meet my convenience is something I greatly appreciate. During the year, we lost, most regretably, our old friend Mr. Jack Brebner. He was a friend of mine and a man who did a very great amount of selfless work in the administration of stock routes. He would go out of his way to spend whole weeks and week-ends of his own time to do things that he thought had to be done. Nothing was too much trouble for him to meet requests from me for information, or approaches from graziers or others for advice or consultation. It was with a great deal of sadness that I noted his passing.

Mr. Muller: His death was a national loss.

Mr. FLETCHER: I thank the hon. member for that interjection. Mr. Brebner was the type of man seldom seen in this country, and his position will be very difficult to fill.

Mr. Thor Hein, the Surveyor-General, retired during the year. Fortunately he is in good health. He is another who gave good service, and I should like metaphorically to "dip my lid" to him on his leaving the department. I pay a similar tribute to all others in lower positions in the department who have always rallied to meet any requests made of them. To them I should like to say, "Thank you very much."

That is all I wish to say at this juncture. I shall now leave it to hon. members to express their views.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (12.33 p.m.): In the first place, I should like to express my appreciation to the Minister, Mr. Muir, Mr. Sallows, Mr. McDowell, Mr. Cochrane, Mr. Bensted, and the various Land Commissioners and officers in my electorate, for their many acts of kindness and the help they have given me in my frequent visits to the department in the interests of my constituents. At all times I have been accorded the greatest courtesy and, if possible, my requests have been granted.

It is also appropriate that I should again associate myself, as I have already done on another occasion, with the Minister in expressing sympathy to the relatives of Mr. Brebner and also to departmental officials in the loss of such a valuable public servant. I know very well that when people become dedicated to their jobs, of necessity they make many self-sacrifices. Whilst it is seemingly our practice to appreciate people after they have passed on, it is nevertheless worthy of us to give at some stage recognition of their services.

During his career, no doubt many people on the land regarded Mr. Brebner as a controversial figure; but I know that whenever he had to make a harsh decision, he had the interests of the State at heart and he made it with a feeling that he had to put the State first. Consequently, he will go down in the history of the Department of Lands as a faithful servant.

In speaking to the Estimates under discussion, let me first repeat a well-known part of the policy of the Australian Labour Party—that it, as a political body, is completely opposed to the freeholding of rural lands. As a consequence, hon. members on this side of the Chamber have from time to time criticised categorically and emphatically the various activities of the Department of Lands, under the former Minister, Mr. Muller, and the present Minister, Mr. Fletcher, because that policy is all-important to us, as the Government's policy is of great importance to it.

The question of freeholding has been raised, and I have watched with great interest the growth in the number of applications since 1957. From the reports of the department I have obtained these figures: in 1961-62, the total number of applications had reached 5,914 with 1,574 applications

in that year; in 1962-63 the total had reached 6,916, and there was a falling-off in applications in that year to 1,002. There seems to be an incorrect figure in the report for 1963-64, because the number of applications was shown as 1,289, which, according to my addition, would bring the total to 8,205, although the report says 7,305. In 1964-65 there were 1,649 applications—the highest number so far—and the total number of applications up to date is 9,854 on my figures but 8,954 according to the department.

Be that as it may, there has been a progressive increase in the number of applications, and I understand from what the Minister said in introducing the Estimates that there is a stronger tendency for people to apply to freehold their land in the current financial year. The fact that the Government faces an election in 1966 might be causing a little more expedition on the part of certain people who fear that after the election in 1966—I hope they are right—the policy will be changed. However, there is one thing of which they can be sure: all obligations made by a Government previously in office will be honoured by the Australian Labour Party in office.

The question of freeholding has interested me greatly, and I have been associated for quite a time with people in the brigalow area. I appreciate the difficulties to which the Minister referred in this Chamber today, particularly the drought. My experience is that the people who have taken up this rather difficult task under the present critical conditions have approached it with great spirit. Unfortunately, they are not faring very well at present, and this has caused me a great deal of concern and I know that it has caused the Minister, too, a great deal of concern.

When I visited the Arcadia area of the brigalow lands development scheme in the Minister's company on 26 August, an appeal was made to him for the deferment of interest and redemption charges. The Minister, after listening to that appeal, later made a statement—not so long ago—regarding the concessions that would be granted to the settlers. That indicates to us very clearly that if those concessions have to be granted the whole question of a drought, especially of the extent of the current one, was not initially considered when the scheme was under consideration.

In our discussions earlier in this Chamber when this matter was raised, we pointed out that there was an uncertainty of rainfall in the area and that these settlers, after they became established as we hoped they would, at some time or other would have to face up to a critical drought, although even then we did not expect that it would be as extensive or as disastrous as the current drought has been, and as it looks like being for quite a time.

The whole question of the purchase lease system, of course, is disapproved of by us. But to make it worse in our estimation

there was introduced into this scheme a system of auction sales. I do not blame the Minister for that, but this is an important facet of the whole development because it comes back, in our estimation anyway, to an intrusion of Commonwealth Government policy into what was a State plan. I have objected to this before. I objected to it when we spoke about the Nogo Gap project and I have spoken about it when discussing other matters also. This State is supposed to be a responsible State with an excellent set of public servants, many of whom possess the highest professional qualifications; yet when an approach is made to the Commonwealth Government we have imposed on us conditions set down by a Government which is out to introduce, whether the Country Party or the Australian Labour Party likes it or not, a policy of freeholding in this State. That is particularly objectionable in this particular instance, when the money was not given to us but lent to us on a basis which, to my mind, is not the easiest of treatment because of the time limit and the conditions involved.

Mr. Muller: How do you account for the high prices at auction?

Mr. O'DONNELL: I intend to deal with that point. There has been a demand that in the implementation of this scheme there should be a 25 per cent. auction-block programme throughout the whole scheme. I am right up to date in this because I have followed every sale, and my figures are correct. There have been 77 ballot blocks and 22 auction blocks. I believe that when we move to area 3 a demand for more auction blocks will be made by the Commonwealth Government before it lends additional money, so the position will become progressively worse.

Mr. Muller: No-one is obliged to buy them.

Mr. O'DONNELL: In reply to that interjection, I have here many interesting figures. If we go through the whole system of auction blocks, my total figures up to date show that sales amounted to £664,598 10s. The part that concerns me very much is that the upset value placed on those blocks by the Department of Lands was £346,140 10s. leaving a difference of £318,458.

As the results throughout the whole programme of auction sales show that the upset figures are unreal, how does the Department of Lands arrive at its upset price? At the first sale the upset price was 29s. an acre, whereas the price realised was 58s. 5d. an acre. At the second sale the upset price was 31s. 4d. an acre, whereas the realised price was an outstanding 79s. an acre. At the third sale the respective prices were 26s. 11d. and 53s. 10d. an acre; at the fourth sale, 26s. 4d. and 53s. 11d. an acre. The last figure I have here, for the sale on 29 September, 1965, is an upset price of £1 7s. 5d. an acre, while the actual price obtained was £2 18s. 1d. That was in the middle of the drought, and the high realisation figure indicates the interest in

land. It is quite clear to me that the people who are buying at auction sales are those with plenty of money. Some of them hold retention areas. A man who owns a retention area or, rather, holds a retention area under leasehold, can buy a block at auction, and so can his wife. I know that at the last sales a husband and wife bid for adjoining blocks and got them. That indicates a weakness in the whole land settlement scheme.

The Minister knows that we disapprove of freehold tenure. Here is one of the big reasons for our disapproval. Only the man with money can take advantage of the situation.

The upset price of the four blocks that were put up for auction on 29 September was £47,470, excluding improvements and survey fees, but the actual price paid was £100,500. It is expected that the owner will spend £25,000 over three years on each of the blocks. That a person has to pay double the upset price of the land, and then spend almost an equivalent amount of money within three years on improvements, is an indication that only people with money can come into this aspect of the scheme.

Mr. Muller: Just whom are they injuring?

Mr. O'DONNELL: They are injuring the people who should have an opportunity to enter ballots for these blocks—even under freehold tenure—at the upset value. They are not injuring themselves; they are taking advantage of their great wealth. That is my point. As one goes right through the figures there is a clear indication that the purchasers are people who are able to afford to pay double the upset price for the land and almost the equivalent of that price in developing the property within three years of purchase.

I want to say something about the man on purchase lease. He required approximately £12,000 to come in. Because of the circumstances under which he came in he is in the position today where he has drawn very heavily on that sum of money to keep himself and on the £24,000 he can borrow from the Corporation Fund in endeavouring to fulfil his conditions. The Minister will agree with this because he said that spraying was costing 24s. 6d. an acre. Today that man has more or less exhausted his credit with the corporation.

I want to emphasise that what the Minister has put forward to help these people in the way of interest and redemption payments is important, but when the Treasurer advances a case to the Federal Government for drought relief he should consider not only the long-term, low-interest loans for the sake of the man suffering from drought, but he must also try to obtain long-term, low-interest loans to help bring stock to many of the properties in the State. In particular, some of the money could very well be allocated to help people who are in a parlous position in the brigalow lands. We know very well that some of them are in a very

bad way; the man who went in with the minimum capital is really in trouble owing to the drought. I know that many people went into the scheme conscious of the conditions, and because they were conscious of them they drew heavily on the fund in an attempt to satisfy the department that they were good tenants—and, on the average they are good tenants—worthy of the department's confidence and therefore worthy of the confidence of the people of this State. I think they should be given consideration, and I know that the Minister is sympathetic otherwise he would not have provided the amended conditions of interest and redemption payments.

Let me summarise what they mean, for I have no time to go through them all. The deferment of payments means that for the first three-year period the total payments for an average freeholding ballot block will be approximately 40 per cent. of what they should have been, which indicates that the Minister is sympathetic. No-one who has seen the drought-stricken country, complicated by the regrowth of suckers everywhere, could fail to realise the tremendous problems confronting the settlers, and, equally so, no-one could fail to have sympathy for them. I am not saying that there are not worse conditions in other parts of the State, for, indeed, there are.

I want it clearly understood that I believe, when consideration is being given, that these people should not be passed over because they are already receiving this assistance, which I consider is insufficient. We must get these blocks stocked, but I am afraid the settlers have not the money, and the stock firms are not keen to advance money other than on short-term loan. In addition, they want the people who need the stock to provide 50 per cent. of the money.

The important aspects of this scheme are, firstly, that it is hoped to increase carrying capacity from 36,000 head to 58,000 head in five years on retention areas alone, and, secondly, on ballot blocks it is hoped to increase carrying capacity from 27,000 head to 78,000 head in the same period. In other words, it is hoped that the development will reduce the ratio of land to stock from 30 to 1 to 10 to 1. The Government has advanced a scheme which must not be allowed to fail because the men who have settled there sold what they had so that they could come into the scheme. Many of them have family responsibilities and, as they see their money dwindling away they think they have let their families down. This feeling may be accentuated to a certain extent because they were perhaps quite comfortable in their previous occupations. They have taken on this pioneering—and it is nothing other than pioneering at present—and should be looked after as well as possible.

Mr. Muller: What is the remedy—to increase their loan liability?

Mr. O'DONNELL: I do not say that. If they have to get stock they will have to borrow money from somewhere and if that does not increase their loan liability to somebody outside the corporation, I do not know what will. But at present they have not the credit to do that. Therefore the appeal must go through not only for them but also for other people who may be in a similar position regarding stock. They, too, must get some advantage from a long-term, low-interest loan from the Commonwealth Government through the State Government. There should also be a deferment of repayments for a couple of years. I cannot see anything that can be done for these people unless it is along those lines. Drought relief limited to fodder provision is not enough. Stocking or re-stocking will be all important.

Our land development is reflected in the productivity and income of the State. Over the past five years this State has had three deficits in trade, that is, an excess of imports over exports. In 1964-65 the figure reached the alarming amount of £56,298,000. As a primary-producing State we have carried Australia on our back from the overseas credit point of view, and in three out of the last five years we have been forced to show deficits. That is another matter the Department of Lands should consider. Development means productivity. No matter what we say about Queensland's great hope for secondary development, we must admit that we have unlimited opportunities to develop primary industries. Consequently our land development policy is very important. In addition to our land development policy, we must have close liaison with the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply so that we can constantly be on the upward trend and increase production and establish overseas markets so as to give us the prosperity that this State so richly deserves.

I cannot canvass the whole of the very interesting speech delivered by the Minister. Successive speakers can, if they wish, deal with their own local problems. I reiterate that it is our ambition to take over the reins of government in 1966. We will then have a good look at our land-holding policy.

(Time expired.)

[*Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.*]

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (2.15 p.m.): In speaking to the Estimates of the Department of Lands, I should like to say that I appreciate that for the first time in the history of Queensland the Minister can say that every leaseholder has the right, if he so desires, to freehold land up to a living area. That is very important, because it gives to landholders peace of mind and enables them to proceed, with a feeling of stability and security, to develop their land on first-class lines. For the State of Queensland it means solid development and increased productivity, because there is not the slightest doubt that if a man has secure tenure of his land he is prepared to undertake

long-term plans for over-all production. From this tendency the State gains the advantage of freeholding.

For Australia as a whole, freeholding is a means of producing increased exports and a much better balance of trade. As all hon. members are aware, primary industries produce approximately 80 per cent. of Australia's export income, so that it is very important to have primary production established on the solid and secure base of freehold land.

During the last 12 months the freeholding of land has been speeded up, and I appreciate the work of the officers of the department in this and many other matters. They have been very co-operative not only in assisting in the freeholding of land but in matters concerning public bodies who require land for special purposes in the public interest. In these cases I have found the Minister and his officers keen to help for the good of the community.

Whilst appreciating that the speed of freeholding has been increased, naturally I would like to see it further increased, because applications are not being finalised as fast as most people, including me, would like to see. I refer particularly to cases in which there has to be liaison with the Department of Forestry. Naturally, quite a few problems arise when land to be freeholded carries stands of valuable timber. In these cases the co-operation of the Department of Forestry is essential. Whilst I am much happier with the situation than I was at one stage, I should like to see greater co-operation between the Department of Lands and the Department of Forestry and a speeding up in the valuing of timber and the freeholding of lands.

The fact that valuations can now be accepted within 42 days is a considerable step forward. Landholders throughout the State appreciate not having to go through the Land Court if they are satisfied with the valuation made by the department and accept it within 42 days.

Another thing that has created a much better atmosphere between Crown tenants and the Crown is that in the last 10 years of a lease a tenant can carry out substantial improvements, as long as they are of a type necessary for the successful running of the property, and claim compensation for them. I stress particularly timber treatment. It was the policy of many crown tenants to neglect timber treatment in the last 10 years of a lease. When it was obvious that they were going to lose the land, they just free-wheeled over the last 10 years. Now they can carry on with the timber treatment, control the suckers and regrowth, and keep the land in first-class order. The fact that tenants receive compensation for this work means that they look after their land and production does not decline in the later stages of their lease. The overall gain to the State is of great significance, because

the properties are still at the peak of their production when they pass into the hands of the new lessees who draw blocks at ballot.

Earlier in the debate reference was made to Mr. Jack Brebner of the Co-ordinating Board, and I join with the Minister and other hon. members in expressing sympathy to Mrs. Brebner and to his close associates. I was fortunate in being closely associated with Mr. Brebner in connection with the erection of certain sections of the dingo barrier fence, which I think will be his greatest monument. The fence was the subject of a good deal of criticism in the early stage of its erection, but since its completion the people in the area that I represent have had nothing but praise for it. Many people who were antagonistic to its construction now look upon it as a great boon. I know a number of instances in which men who are levied £10, £12, or £15 per annum on their property are saving at least £100 per annum merely because they do not have to attend dingo drives in the areas now protected by the fence. I think quite a few of those men would admit that their investment of £10, £12 or £15 per annum is saving them £100 per annum and, at the same time, relieving them of a great deal of worry and concern that goes with proximity to dingoes. As I said, I look upon the dingo barrier fence as a monument to Mr. Brebner for a job well done, and I again express my sympathy to his relatives.

From time to time concern has been expressed about the prices being paid at auction for freehold land in the brigalow land development scheme. The pattern seems to be that the prices paid are about double the upset prices. Although the coffers of the State benefit from this, and we should be thankful that they do, I believe that the prices being paid are too high when one takes into account the work that has to be done on the blocks. Apparently the department shares my opinion, because, as I said, the upset prices that it fixes are about half those that are ultimately paid.

In my opinion, it is not men with money who are responsible for this; it is the fact that those who have not quite enough money can borrow what they need on terms. In some ways it is like a hire-purchase scheme. Many people are tempted to pay a greater price for an article on hire-purchase merely because the money is available to them. The fact that cheap money is available—under hire-purchase, of course, it is not—for the purchase of land over a period is one reason why purchasers can afford to pay above the market value for it. I assume that most of those who purchase this land would not be able to pay cash for the property, and if auctions were conducted on a cash basis—I am not saying that I advocate that they should be—the prices at auction would be lower. Where a person has time to pay, there is a tendency for him to pay a higher price and pay his way as he goes.

That is all very well if the seasons are good. But in the past 12 months the State has experienced the worst drought since 1902, at least, and possibly the worst drought in its history. Some of these people are faced with the situation of not making enough money to pay off this hire-purchase deal out of revenue. Consequently, they are in dire trouble and I appreciate the fact that the Minister has gone out of his way to help them out of it.

Mr. Bennett: What has he done?

Mr. McKECHNIE: He has gone out and had a look at these blocks, and has made certain concessions to assist those concerned. He is the type of man who, whenever there is a problem, will immediately go out and look into these matters, and the fact that he has found a way to partially assist these people is to his credit.

The Minister said that the Rabbit Control Authority is doing a good job and I should like to confirm what he had to say. Most of the work done under this authority so far has applied to my electorate as there are eight units working in the Goondiwindi rabbit area. It is doing a good job—there is no doubt about that—in spite of the fact that it is rather awkward during a drought to conduct this type of programme. However, there is one advantage. Naturally, rabbits are much more prone to take a bait during a drought period because they are short of food. Except for the poison in them the baits constitute good food, and the rabbits are keen to take them. But so are the sheep, and in this regard there has been considerable liaison between the department and the landholders.

This liaison is very essential because if many baits are left about they will certainly be picked up by sheep, and it is to the credit of the department that I have heard of only a few instances in which sheep losses have occurred. Naturally, some loss is inevitable because not every bait can be cleaned up. The Rabbit Control Authority is doing a good job in destroying rabbits and, at the same time, protecting the sheep from poison baits.

When the relevant legislation was being discussed earlier in the term of this Parliament consideration was given to whether rabbits could be declared non-commercial as they are in New Zealand. It was decided not to do that but to allow the trapping of rabbits to remain as a commercial enterprise. This, in turn, is benefiting the rabbit areas because the two freezing works are still operating and decimating the small numbers of rabbits left in parts where the teams are not yet operating. Instead of working contrary to the Rabbit Control Authority, as New Zealand considered would be the case, we have found that the co-operation of the two is wiping out rabbits where the rabbit teams are working, and in the forward areas where greater numbers of rabbits exist the encouraging of trappers is decimating the rabbits.

The scarcity of rabbits is demonstrated by the fact that in Brisbane rabbits cost 6s. each. Not so many years ago one would be lucky to get 6d. for a rabbit.

Mr. O'Donnell: They were always around 1s. 3d.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Going well back into the 1930's, I know the rabbit got 1d. a rabbit. I do not know what the Brisbane people paid for rabbits in those days, but the trapper received 1d. a head. Today, of course, he is receiving much more than that. I raise that point merely to illustrate that we are bringing rabbits under control despite the fact that myxomatosis is waning in its effect. The Minister said in his introductory speech that intensive inoculation schemes with myxomatosis have been carried out in the current year, but myxomatosis is not a great help at present because, without mosquitoes, it is ineffective. In addition, more rabbits are becoming immune to myxomatosis.

When the drought eventually breaks the department will have to look to the regeneration of desirable fodder-producing plants and grasses in large areas of Queensland.

Mr. Bennett: The Labour Government will do that next March.

Mr. McKECHNIE: I hope it will be done, but it will be done by the same good, solid Government as we have now.

We will have to find ways to regenerate fodder-producing plants, particularly in the light-soil areas where the country has been denuded. Unfortunately the problem will be partly solved by the fact that stocking will have been reduced by the drought. In some areas we will have to consider ways and means of stocking much more lightly until the land recovers. I know that I am getting outside the ambit of this debate, but I compare what I am suggesting with long-term loans at low-interest rates to re-stock properties. The department will need to look at ways and means of encouraging the regeneration and reclamation of areas that are in the process of being turned into a desert.

I should like to express a few thoughts on stock routes and reserves. With the advent of motor transport and closer settlement in the close inland areas—not so much on the coast or in the Far West—the drover's services are no longer required, except in very rare instances. Consequently in the near future we will need to take a good look at the present use of stock routes and reserves. The day has passed when we needed wide stock routes and big reserves for the transport and holding of sheep and cattle in the close inland areas. In these days during good seasons the reserves are merely neglected, overgrown areas inhabited by pigs, kangaroos, and, sometimes, dingoes. They constitute a fire hazard to adjoining fences and are of no practical use to anybody in the area. They produce no rates for the local authority or revenue for the State. Admittedly, to some extent they can assist in drought years

but then, in some instances, it is a case of who gets there first gets the available feed. I must commend the various local authorities for making use of the available feed during periods of drought even though perhaps it is not always justly and fairly allocated. In desperate periods, local authority regulations have been overlooked so that the feed did not go to waste. However, in normal times the reserves are more of a menace than anything else. In future we need only small areas for reserves. Stock routes are a different matter.

Stock routes provide facilities under six headings: roads; a way for telephone lines; a way for electric power lines; access and feed for stock; windbreaks, particularly in country that has been over-developed; and fire-breaks. Those are the purposes that the reserves serve, and we must not under-develop or over-develop them. We should not leave them as they are, as they are growing but little feed in timbered areas. We must ensure that enough green timber is left standing on them to make a good wind-break, and we must keep them as fire-breaks. In broad outline, I suggest that half their width be developed to be used in times of drought as fodder reserves. Other than the watering access available on reserves and the small area around them, I do not think the need for them is as great as it used to be.

In New South Wales the various pasture protection boards have a system whereby they develop the stock routes; they are separate semi-government instrumentalities. Time does not permit me to go into the ramifications in detail but it would be well if the department, and this Parliament in its next session, made a new approach to stock routes and reserves in the light of motorised transport of stock. In good seasons most of the fodder on stock routes goes to waste, and the large ones create a fire hazard and are of no benefit to the State. I should like to see a plan implemented whereby we retain the stock routes, improve them, and keep them for the six purposes I have mentioned. At the same time we could make better use of portions of some of the reserves. This is quite a big question, but as my time has almost expired I will conclude my remarks on it and commend them to the department.

I congratulate the Minister on a year of development in which many progressive Bills have been introduced. We have seen legislation introduced for the freeholding of a living area. I commend the Minister for that. He is the first Minister for Lands to give the landholders of Queensland, wherever they may be, an opportunity to freehold a living area. At the same time, I am very happy to see that the limit of 10,000 acres has been applied so that land cannot be aggregated in large areas.

An Opposition Member: That is what you think.

Mr. McKECHNIE: That is what I feel very strongly about. It is undesirable for freehold land to be aggregated in large areas. I look upon the principle of freeholding land as very important for Queensland because under it we can get development. However, we do not want unbridled aggregations, nor, at the other end of the scale, do we want to see very tiny blocks, which can be detrimental. The legislation guards against aggregation.

Mr. Bennett: It does not do a thing.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes, it does. It provides a safeguard against aggregations. I commend the Minister on his stand in the matter.

In conclusion, I congratulate the Minister. I appreciate the job he and his officers are doing. I trust that we can further speed up freeholding to help the people of Queensland gain this advantage as quickly as possible.

Mr. AIKENS: (Townsville South) (2.39 p.m.): When listening to the previous speaker, I really thought of the truth of the old saying that the wish is father to the thought, for he said that while he believed in freeholding—as indeed so do I up to a certain point—he objected to aggregations of freehold land. If anyone can tell me how we can prevent aggregations of freehold land I will be very happy to listen because we have in this Chamber two members of the legal fraternity, and if there is any loop-hole or funk-hole in the law by which freehold can be aggregated I feel sure they will be only too happy to make their services available—at the stiffest fee—to anyone who wants to aggregate freehold land.

Mr. Bennett: Why shouldn't they charge a fee if people want to get half of Queensland tied up in one company?

Mr. AIKENS: That interjection gives us an idea of the mentality of the A.L.P. with regard to freehold tenure. They oppose anybody else holding land on freehold tenure, yet their own homes are built on freehold land. Members of the Australian Labour Party do not rush in to have their freehold tenure converted to perpetual lease or any other form of leasehold tenure. They all hang on to their freehold tenure, while denying that right to everybody else. They deny the right to the worker, whom they are supposed to represent, to have his home, shop, place of business, or little farm on freehold tenure.

That is a striking example of the sickening hypocrisy of the Australian Labour Party. We are to get another striking example of it—I know I am slightly out of order in saying this, Mr. Hodges—when the Done Committee report is discussed in this Chamber. These are the men who are told by Egerton and others at the Trades Hall that they are being overpaid. But they have no idea how much Egerton, Doyle, Townsend and other members of Q.C.E. are being paid as

trade union officials, and haven't the guts to find out. However, I will allow my remarks on that point to wait until the appropriate time.

Over the years this Parliament, which has been in operation for something over a century—

Mr. O'Donnell interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: The hon. member for Barcoo has interjected. He is a man who claims to represent a big western country constituency. As soon as he was elected he could not get away from Barcoo fast enough to rush down here and live in a palatial residence in the rabbit-warren known as Brisbane. The only time he goes back to his electorate is when he is driven back there by his shame and conscience. I know something about my electorate and know something about North Queensland because I live there every moment I can; I begrudge every moment I have to spend in Brisbane.

Mr. Bennett: The people in your electorate are happy while you are living down here.

Mr. AIKENS: The people of South Brisbane would pay a premium to have the hon. member for South Brisbane taken away from his electorate. They would be glad to get rid of him for any short period that could be arranged. If they paid me enough I would remove him from South Brisbane, and from the parliamentary scene permanently.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order!

Mr. AIKENS: Let us get on with the very serious matter of land tenure in this State. This Parliament as I say, has been in operation for about a century. Over that period I do not know who has been responsible for the hotch-potch of land tenure that exists. Possibly it was successive Governments or those officers who have been in control of the Department of Lands over the years.

In the early days when Queensland was first established a little over 100 years ago the real prosperity in Queensland for a while rested in the gold-mining industry and, later on, the copper-mining industry. Gympie and Charters Towers were discovered. The Ravenswood, Palmer, and various other gold, copper, and other mineral fields were discovered. The Government of the day began to issue a land tenure known as a miner's lease or a miner's homestead lease. Today those leases represent only a very small percentage of the area of the State. But we still have these miners' leases and miners' homestead leases remaining in areas that are no longer mining areas and could not conceivably be classed as mining areas.

I make an appeal to the Minister for Lands, if he is susceptible to any appeal that comes from me—I know if I were a member of the Townsville City Council he would drop down onto the carpet and strike his forehead thrice upon it and say,

"Yes, I will do anything you ask me to do"—to get in touch with the Minister for Mines to bring this matter before Cabinet and have those huge areas of mining leases and mining homestead leases transferred back to the administration of the Department of Lands.

Let me give an example of the terrific hotch-potch of land tenure that exists in Queensland today. The Minister may not know this. I would not be surprised at anything the Minister did not know about land tenure. Along the northern railway line, in the cane-growing area round Bambaroo and Mutarnee, some of the best pineapples produced in the State are grown on land held under mining leases and miners' homestead leases. Back in the days when the blacks were bad there happened to be small mines there, and the Government cut up the land into mining leases and miners' homestead leases. The last miner worked there about 60 or 70 years ago, yet the land is still held under those tenures.

When the Government, quite wisely, introduced legislation to freehold Crown land—I think the hon. member for Fassifern first brought it down when he was Minister for Lands—the first to be allowed to convert land to freehold were those holding leases of town or business allotments and small farming properties. Later the law was amended to permit freeholding of areas of land up to 5,000 or 6,000 acres; it could be even 30,000 acres. I opposed the freeholding of large areas of land. It was also provided that any person who held land under a lease administered by the Department of Lands, whether it be an ordinary grazing or farming lease or perpetual lease, could convert the land to freehold. I thought that was a good thing, as long as the areas freeholded were not too large.

Surprisingly enough, men are growing pineapples, cane, and other fruits and crops on land on the coast from Townsville north—and, I suppose, in other areas—on mining leases and miners' homestead leases, and they cannot convert their land to freehold simply because it is held under that type of tenure and comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Mines. Their neighbours, who may hold ordinary grazing or pastoral leases under the administration of the Minister for Lands, are permitted to freehold their land. That situation is too ridiculous for words. One man may have a farm in one area and, because the land is held under ordinary leasehold tenure, he can convert it to freehold. The man next door, on a property divided from that of the first man by only a wire fence, may not be able to convert his land, on which he is growing the same crop, to freehold tenure simply because it is held under a mining lease or miners' homestead lease. If anyone can tell me anything more stupid than that, I should be pleased to listen to it.

I appeal to the Minister for Lands to try to clean up the shocking mess into which land tenures in Queensland have

grown. I shall not develop the argument as it applies to various other forms of tenure. Let the Minister start where I have suggested and clean up the mess existing in Queensland today with mining leases and miners' homestead leases.

In Charters Towers a very good friend of mine decided to establish a drive-in picture theatre. Although a lot of mining was carried out there in the early days—I think £30,000,000 worth of gold was taken out in its best days—none is done there now. My friend selected a good site for his theatre, and then came the question of the tenure of the land. Finally, by arrangement with the Department of Mines and the local mining warden, he was able to obtain a lease of some land on which he has erected a very palatial and expensive drive-in picture theatre. However, because the land on which it is situated is held under miners' homestead lease and miners' lease, he can get no document or deed to establish his ownership of it. Anyone who knows anything about mining lease and miners' homestead lease tenure knows that the lessee of such land receives no document at all. Anyone who obtains land under leasehold or freehold tenure is given a deed or document by the Department of Lands so that he can show the world that he is the lessee of the land.

What happens to the man to whom I am referring happens to scores of others similarly placed. He has a large area of land on which he has invested several thousands of pounds, yet he has no document or article of any kind to show his entitlement to it. I understand that he will have to go to the office of the mining warden before 31 December each year and pay rent for the mining lease, and all that he will get is a receipt about 6 inches by 2 inches wide. He has only a receipt for the rental he has paid on that mining lease; he has no other document or deed of any kind—nothing to show that he is the owner or the lessee of the land.

We know the reason for that, of course. In the early days when prospectors went into a mining area they took out a mining lease. If they found that they had picked a dud, to use an old mining phrase, they would roll their swag and be gone overnight. Consequently, in order to avoid the confusion that might exist if a lease or some other form of document were issued, miners' leases were issued purely and simply on the basis that the rental was paid every year and a small receipt was issued for the money paid.

Surely to goodness the Minister can go into the Charters Towers area, the Chillagoe area, the Gympie area, or the Ravenswood area—any of the areas that were once big mining fields—and say, "This land is no longer genuinely miners' leases or miners' homestead leases. I intend to take it over for administration by the Department of Lands and issue it under ordinary lease

tenure or freehold tenure to anyone who wants to lease it or buy it. I will give the people who buy or lease it a document to show that they own or lease the land." I do not think anyone can cavil at what I am saying, and no-one can say that I am not making an honest and sincere approach to the Government to clear up on unholy mess that has accumulated over the years, a mess for which it is not responsible but which it has inherited.

I wish to bring to the attention of the Minister for Lands a position that exists in Townsville today. Strangely enough, I do not intend to sit in critical judgment on anyone in this regard. Many years ago when Townsville was set up as a city, the Crown decided to make available for recreational purposes certain areas of land. Those areas were, as usual, vested in the council as trustees, and the council operates the trust and controls the land. But in North Ward at present there is perhaps one of the finest sporting areas in Queensland, known as the Sports Reserve. It is Crown land and is vested in Sports Reserve trustees. It is such a lovely piece of recreational land that every Sunday in the football season three games of football are played on it simultaneously and every Saturday and Sunday in the cricket season three cricket matches are played on it simultaneously.

Just across Burke Street is another large area of land known as Queen's Park, which is a sort of addendum to the old Townsville City Council Botanic Gardens, and I shall deal with it first. It was once a very lovely park, and is used now by many young girls who play vigoro, cricko, softball, and similar games. But some of the fences have fallen down and the whole park is a disgrace to the city. On the Burke Street side of it is a big open drain, and the big banyan trees, which were once a glory and a pleasure to look at, now badly need trimming. Any time on a Saturday or Sunday one can see motor-cars racing and tearing across it, and if there is a big sporting fixture on at the Sports Reserve—the Foley Shield final, or the football match in which the Englishmen will play North Queensland next June—Queen's Park is used as a parking area. I can only describe Queen's Park today as a desolate waste, and how the young girls play sport there on Saturday afternoon and Sunday beggars description.

On the other side of Burke Street is, as I said, the Sports Reserve. It is fenced with galvanised iron and contains tennis courts controlled by the Townsville Tennis Association. In the summer-time, of course, the cricket association controls cricket fixtures on it, and in the winter-time the Townsville Rugby League controls football on it. But the provision of amenities is stagnating, and it appears to be stagnating because of the continual bickering between the various sporting bodies who use the land and the trustees who control the Sports Reserve.

I take a keen interest in these matters, and I am going to be quite honest and fair and say that I have no criticism to offer of the Sports Reserve trustees. They appear to be victims of circumstances inasmuch as they are trustees of this beautiful area of land yet have no means of raising money to improve it or to provide facilities and amenities, except from the rent they charge the Rugby League people in winter-time and the Townsville Cricket Association in summer-time. Naturally there is a limit to the rent they can charge those two bodies. Consequently, because their income is limited by the rent they can charge the Rugby League and the Townsville Cricket Association, there is a limit to the work they can do on the Sports Reserve.

This reserve needs something done to it, and very urgently. Some time ago there was a proposal to the present Minister that the Rugby League people be allowed to lease one corner of it to an oil company, which intended to erect a service station on it. The Minister said, "If that corner is excised from the Sports Reserve, I will allow you to lease it"—I think he said for 15 or 20 years—and he said "At the end of that time I will come in as Minister for the Crown and will lease it to the oil company thereafter. I cannot allow the Sports Reserve trustees to lease a portion of the Sports Reserve in perpetuity to an oil company or to anyone else."

Perhaps there was some justification for what he said in that regard, but if we consider the sympathetic treatment that has been given by this Government to the Queensland Cricket Association relative to the cricket ground at Woolloongabba, if we consider the fact that this Government has gone out of its way to assist sporting associations in Brisbane to secure their own grounds or to lease their own grounds and the way it has gone out of its way to allow the trustees of those grounds to raise money to improve the grounds and to provide facilities and amenities, we must begin to wonder whether or not this Government is, as the Labour Party sometimes claims, a Queen Street Government.

I do not know just what the Minister intends to do with the Sports Reserve in Townsville or with Queen's Park. It is obvious that sooner or later he will have to do something. I believe that he himself should go to Townsville and meet the trustees of the Sports Reserve; he should meet the Townsville City Council representatives. I can assure him that he could meet them without grovelling or genuflection if he really wants to; he should meet the representatives of the North Queensland Rugby League and the Townsville Rugby League; he should meet the representatives of the Townsville Cricket Association; and he should try to iron out a new form of trusteeship not only for the Sports Reserve but for Queen's Park as well. I really think that, whether or not the council objected to it,

Burke Street should be closed from Warburton Street to Paxton Street, and Queen's Park should be integrated with the Sports Reserve.

If the Minister does that and sets up a new board of trustees and a new basis of trusteeship, then the whole area could be securely fenced. Eventually, those people who are in control of that lovely area of land could then go about finding ways and means of raising money to improve it and to provide the facilities and amenities that are required on it.

I repeat that at present Queen's Park is a desolate wilderness. It is a Crown reserve held under trust by the Townsville City Council. It is used more as a car park than anything else. Young girls are allowed to play on it, but how they manage to play on it I cannot understand. The Sports Reserve is a very fine area of land, but because of the restricted nature of the terms of the trusteeship the trustees cannot do anything about raising the money that is vitally necessary for improving it and providing facilities and amenities. Every time it is mentioned in Townsville it results in far too much recrimination between one body and another.

At the last meeting of the North Queensland Rugby League some remarks were passed relative to the trustees of the Sports Reserve. A representative of the trustees went into the columns of "The Townsville Daily Bulletin" and, I think, defended the trustees rather well, but the fact remains that this continual bickering between these various bodies in Townsville who are interested in the use of the Sports Reserve is not getting the Sports Reserve anywhere. It is not getting the sporting associations anywhere, and it is not getting the city of Townsville anywhere.

As the Minister knows, or will learn if he lives long enough, my only interest in the matter is the interest of Townsville and its people, which is apart and distinct from the interest of the present aldermen of the Townsville City Council. Apparently the Minister for Lands cannot discriminate between the two. I suggest that he go up to Townsville and call what could be described as a public meeting, as the late Percy Pease did. At that time the trustees of the Sports Reserve wanted to permit dog-racing on the reserve on Saturday afternoons, but certain people objected. The terms of the trusteeship did not allow for it. The then Minister for Public Lands, the late Hon. Percy Pease, was not too proud to go to Townsville, where he called a public meeting, or a semi-public meeting, in the city hall, which was made available to him. A big concourse of those interested attended the meeting, and the late Percy Pease was able to iron the whole matter out there and then. He set up a new basis for trusteeship and for the election of trustees. Of course, dog-racing went out of fashion, so the Sports Reserve is now

back to cricket and football and the trustees just cannot charge those two bodies out of existence in order to keep the facilities and amenities of the Sports Reserve going.

Mr. Fletcher: What happened to the old system?

Mr. AIKENS: What old system?

Mr. Fletcher: The one you are speaking of?

Mr. AIKENS: The one that was established by Percy Pease? As a matter of fact, I think it is still operating. The trouble was that dog-racing went out of existence. I remember the time when everybody who considered himself somebody ran around the streets at all hours of the night and early morning dragging a couple of mangy-looking greyhounds with him. Probably he would be feeding the greyhounds on rump steak and feeding his kids on shin beef.

Mr. Bennett interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: The hon. member for South Brisbane had an old fawn bitch he used to run up and down Boundary Street.

I am speaking now only as a man who has Townsville's interest at heart. This is a case where everybody thinks something should be done, but nobody knows what should be done. I have my own opinion of what should be done but I will not throw it into the ring here. I will if the Minister comes to Townsville.

Mr. Bennett: Why don't you tell the Townsville City Council what you think when you are enjoying their hospitality?

Mr. AIKENS: I know of only one person more contumacious, more stubborn, more ignorant and more arrogant than the aldermen of the Townsville City Council, and that is the hon. member for South Brisbane. You, Mr. Hooper, know I would have no possible chance of talking sense to him. You know, of course, what chance we have of talking sense to the Townsville City Council.

All that by-play aside, something has to be done about the Sports Reserve in Townsville. I think the only reasonable solution is for the Minister to do what the late Percy Pease did when he was Minister for Public Lands. I suggest that he go to Townsville and call a meeting of all those interested in the matter. He should not restrict the meeting, but have a meeting of all interested so that they could have a really good talk to the Minister and let him know what they believe is best in the interests of the Sports Reserve and Townsville. I appeal to the Minister not to be unduly influenced by the Townsville City Council.

(Time expired.)

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (3.5 p.m.): I commend the Minister and his officers for the manner in which the Estimates of the Department of Lands have been presented. I join with other speakers who have made

reference to the passing of the late Jack Brebner. He was a man who I admired tremendously. He held a very responsible position in which no-one suffered greater criticism than he at the hands of many people. I would need a lot of convincing that the things he had to put up with did not in some way or other contribute to his untimely death. Whatever a man did in the office he held it would not be right in the eyes of all people. He worked very hard and whatever he did was in the interests of the State.

The same remarks apply to all the other officers in the department. They, too, are called upon to make many serious decisions and it would be unreasonable to expect them to be right every time. I am not forgetting the Minister who, finally, has to take the kick on whatever the decision may be. While the Minister acts on the advice of his officers he has to take the final responsibility. I appreciate the difficult position of any Minister for Lands. When we were in Opposition many Ministers for Lands were in the same position. It was very difficult—indeed, well-nigh impossible—to please a large percentage of the people. It is not just a matter of dealing with the people; the Minister has a responsibility to preserve our land.

It would take a lot to convince me that our lands are not the greatest asset the State has. We can establish secondary industries, or anything else, but they come and go. So far as the land is concerned, if its fertility goes everything else goes with it. Our balance of trade—in fact, our whole prosperity—hinges on the land.

In the Minister's opening remarks he referred to what has been done to cope with the spread of noxious weeds. This is a very difficult matter. If soil fertility depreciates, that is one thing; but if we lose our land through the spread of noxious weeds, perhaps that is even worse.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I indicate to hon. members on my left that it is very difficult to hear the hon. member for Fassifern. I would be pleased if they would not engage in loud conversations.

Mr. MULLER: In my time as Minister for Lands I found that in many cases the trouble with people who obtained leases—and this applies to freehold, too—was not that they had insufficient land but that they had more land than they could use and consequently the land was neglected and noxious weeds gained control. I have no time for the person who has his property infested with noxious weeds; the sooner he is off it the better it will be for himself and everybody else. I saw instances of this in some brigalow country. Burr, in particular, is a serious pest in the brigalow areas. The openness of the soil allows Bathurst burr and noogoora burr to spread very rapidly, but these pests can be dealt with by a property owner who takes an interest in his land if he tackles them before they take possession of it. However,

if they take control they are virtually impossible to eradicate other than at a cost greater than the land is worth.

The Minister is still coping with the king of all pests—Harrisia cactus. In my time we were called upon to make major decisions in connection with it and I know that considerable work has been done. But it is still a serious pest. Never at any time did I expect it to be wiped out in the course of a few years. Here again, the spread of Harrisia cactus has been due to people holding more land than they could reasonably use or control. My observations led me to believe that where people had this pest on their property and had sufficient land to make a decent living other than where the Harrisia cactus was taking over, they allowed it to spread. If action had been taken earlier to subdivide these properties into areas which people could use and control, the noxious weeds and pests would not have become as bad as they have. Of course, at that time people did not know just how serious a pest it was. Frequently the eradication of noxious weeds, after they have taken possession of the land, costs more than the land is worth. That applies largely to the Harrisia cactus area. Whether it liked it or not the Government was obliged to spend large sums of money assisting to eradicate it.

I gather from the Minister's remarks that it is too early to say whether the spraying of brigalow suckers has been successful. One of the great difficulties there is dealing with regrowth, because sucker after sucker comes up and takes possession, and sometimes it is worse than the scrub was in the first place. It is too costly to deal with it manually and sometimes would cost more than the land is worth. The only effective way of controlling it is to cultivate the soil with a plough, and if a landholder has too large an area he cannot cultivate it all.

Aerial spraying is nothing new. Experience shows that it has not been very successful. In some cases there is a reasonably good kill, whereas in others there is no kill at all. I ask the Minister to tell us the cost of aerial spraying. I know it is not cheap by any means. In reply to a question I asked, the Minister said that 2,4,5-T was being used. The cost of the material and the cost of spreading it would be high. I ask the Committee to visualise the position of a lessee or freeholder if spraying of this kind is a failure. The cost will be great if it is successful; if it is not successful it will be ruinous. What happens when that stage is reached?

With brigalow, there can be one property on which clearing appears to have been successful and on which grass is growing, whereas just over the fence there can be another property on which there is a good deal of regrowth. Our scientists are falling down on the job in this regard. This development has been going on for about 10 years and by now we should know what type of material to use and whether it is effective or

economic. We should not be guessing and telling somebody to try something simply because it has been successful in one case. We ought to know why it has not been successful in all cases. We should be past the stage of experiment and should know how to treat this land. If we do not, we should not encourage people to settle on it and face ruin. We should not ask people with small amounts of capital to accept the responsibility of developing the Dawson and Fitzroy River Valley areas.

The hon. member for Barcoo made an excellent contribution. Much of this work is carried on in his area. I do not agree with everything he said, but he mentioned that many of the settlers are in a difficult position. Some of them are still spending money and their only real complaint is that they cannot borrow more. I gather from his remarks that they are earning virtually nothing. His speech confirms the view I held when this land was opened up. I know I am perhaps crying alone in the wilderness, but right from the time the brigalow lands were opened up I condemned the scheme and said that the settlers did not have a hope of success. I still say so. I feel that it is quite wrong to encourage young men with little capital to go into this area with a tremendous loan liability, without knowing how they will come out.

Mr. Davies: Now that you are a member of the Government, you will have to accept your share of the responsibility.

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member for Maryborough has his opinion; I am speaking as I feel, and I always do that. With my experience in land settlement and grazing and farming, I think that my opinion should be worth something. I am not carried away by the action of people from other States coming here and buying freehold blocks of land. That does not influence me one scrap. Again and again I have seen these people, particularly Victorians, coming here with the best of intentions and, without knowing the snags attached to it, looking for cheap land in Queensland.

When the land was opened for settlement, I understand that a condition imposed by the Federal Government when advancing money was that a certain percentage of blocks were to be submitted to public auction. I do not complain about that. I am not concerned about the people who have come here with £100,000, as we have been told this morning, and have invested in this land. What they are using is their own cash. My concern is for our young Queenslanders who are induced to take up this land without knowing what is ahead of them. They go in with about £12,000. As I said when the legislation was before Parliament, it will cost anything from £60,000 to £80,000 to develop and stock these properties. The information available today confirms conclusively that it will cost all that I said it would, and perhaps more.

No provision was made for drought, which will strike and strike again. We will emerge from this one, and in a few years' time there will probably be another to contend with. When I assumed the Lands portfolio, I shall tell hon. members how I felt about the opening of this land for settlement. There was a time in my life when I thought that a young man drawing one of the blocks had won a prize; it was almost as though he had won the Golden Casket. Now I am satisfied that nothing is farther from the truth. The prize is obtained only when the block is developed and brought into production. If the person who obtains a block cannot develop it, it will prove to be a liability instead of an asset. I saw hundreds of young men who were disillusioned and did not know where they were going.

I think the time has arrived when people should be told exactly what they are up for, instead of allowing what may happen to remain a matter of guessing. When one gets down to figures, the stark truth emerges that it is not a business proposition to put £80,000 into a property that will carry 800 to 1,000 head of cattle. I have been in the cattle industry all my life, and I know what it costs to run a property. Expenses continue all the time, and these heavy responsibilities cannot be carried. It must be remembered that to pay instalments as they fall due money has to be obtained from profits, and, before money is available to pay instalments, the Commissioner of Taxation asks for his share, which in a great many cases can be a considerable amount. If a man clears one hurdle, he still runs up against a brick wall.

A great many of these people are now going through hell—and that describes it lightly. They have little or no returns, and some have not even water. Because others have been prepared to pay large sums of money for these properties, they have been led to believe that they are worth those amounts. For the one who buys a property, the position is perhaps not so serious, as at least he has some money. It is, however, a very serious matter for the young man who has gone onto a block with little or no capital.

I disagree completely with what the hon. member for Barcoo said about freeholding. I introduced into this Chamber the first legislation providing for freeholding, and at that time I said that I believed there were cases in which leasehold would be preferable to freehold because people would not have enough money to carry out the developmental work that was needed. After all, freehold is really valuable only where the land requires heavy developmental expenditure. If one carries out those improvements, one wants to know that the property is one's own for all time, not until some future date. That is the real reason for freehold tenure.

Again, from the State's point of view, it would be quite wrong to allow too much freehold land to pass to people merely because they were blessed with more of this world's goods than others, because in the days to come many young people would be denied the right to acquire freehold land.

I intend to be somewhat critical on the question of freeholding, and I know that the Minister expects criticism from me. I have a small area of leasehold land, and so that I might fully appreciate the difficulties of some of the lessees who have applied to convert their land to freehold, I made application to convert my leasehold land to freehold. My application was made on 1 January, 1962—almost four years ago—and it has not yet come before the court, although it is set down for hearing on 1 December. I do not know why there should be such a long delay. It seems that officers of the Department of Lands or the Department of Forestry are falling down on the job. When I introduced the legislation originally, I said that not more than six months should elapse between the making of the application and the hearing of the matter by the court, and I still believe that that should be so. However, my application has taken almost four years to come before the court, and some other applications have taken even longer than that.

Perhaps the worst feature is the valuing of the land. First, a value has to be put on the timber, and I accept responsibility for including that provision in the original Bill. Because in my opinion it was quite wrong to expect anyone to get possession of a piece of land carrying a heavy stand of timber without paying for that timber, I laid it down that the purchaser would have to pay for it. However, the value of the timber on my land has been estimated at more than twice what it is worth. It is not possible to go before the court with evidence of its value, because even a saw-miller who goes through and strips it will say that it is impossible to tell how much the timber is worth until it is cut. A number of obstacles of this type are in the way of the person who makes application to freehold.

In my own case, the value struck by the Department of Lands is 2½ times that struck by the Valuer-General's Department, and that variation seems to be fairly general throughout the State. Surely no-one can argue successfully that the Valuer-General's valuations are too low, because almost every day one hears complaints in this Chamber that his valuations are too high. It is possible, of course, to go to the court and argue it before the court and get some redress, but it is impossible to combat the claim made relative to the value of the timber. The real trouble seems to lie in the time that it takes the department to arrive at the value of the land and the time that it takes one's application to reach the court.

Quite a lot can be said about the improvement of land, and I appreciate what the Minister and his officers are doing to investigate the possibility of retaining the fertility of the soil and improving it where possible. I am somewhat amused, I might say at this stage, by some of the experimental work that is being done to improve the wallum country. The Minister for Primary Industries has just left the Chamber; I should like him to be here to defend himself. It is costing about £15 an acre to improve the wallum country to the stage where it will carry stock, and there is no guarantee how long it will remain in that condition. I am sure that additional money will have to be provided in the next few years to enable it to continue carrying stock. Again, one gets back to the question of over-capitalisation.

If a settler has to spend a certain amount on land, he can only find that, in the end, the land is not worth what it cost. I think that is something that should be examined very carefully. I know Press reporters get information from people working in these areas, but they do not get the whole of the story to pass on to the public. Before anyone goes into the question of these costly improvements we should at least know what they are to cost. I think the scheme has been going on for too long without any definite information being obtained about it.

I should like to draw the attention of hon. members to what has happened in connection with pasture improvement on some of our better soils. Taking my own district as an example, new grasses were established while the district was experiencing the wicked drought through which we have not yet passed, and they died. If they are established in irrigated areas it is a different matter and in some such areas they have done very well, but we must always remember that this work is very costly and we ought to try to paint a clear picture for people and not exaggerate the position and lead them to believe these things can be done at a reasonable cost. The grasses on an area of land always reflect the value of the land itself. If one has to grow better grasses, one has to build up the fertility of the soil before those grasses can be grown. In very many cases that building-up is very expensive.

Before I get away from the question of freehold versus leasehold, I should like to draw the attention of the Committee to what has happened to many of our building sites. The hon. member for Townsville South mentioned a moment ago that some of the critics of freehold were quite prepared to have freehold for their own building sites.

Going back some years, many towns throughout Queensland were opened up on a leasehold basis and the building allotments were laid out on that tenure. People in those towns felt that it was a fine thing to get a building block for nothing; that all they had to do was pay a rental on the value of the land. The rental was 3 per cent. of the value

set on the land, so that a block worth £1,000 attracted an annual rental of £30. But let us look at the burden carried by these people in country towns. The 3 per cent. rental goes on in perpetuity or until kingdom-come, if I may put it that way, and it becomes so serious that the buildings constructed on this type of land greatly depreciate in value because of the "slug" of the rent, which is payable for all time. Some of the blocks that were valued at £1,000 could have been bought in the first place for less than one year's rent of £30. One could go to many of the suburbs and probably buy half a dozen for what would be paid in rent over two or three years. So, if anyone gained a great concession from the freeholding provision, it was the wages man who wished to own a home of his own and who could freehold it and know there was no encumbrance on it.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DUFFICY (Warrego) (3.29 p.m.): I appreciate very much the speech made by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. He at least demonstrated that he knows something about land and a correct land policy for Queensland.

I think everyone would agree that the hon. member who spoke before him, the hon. member for Townsville South, is possibly our best entertainer; nobody takes him very seriously, anyway. If the hon. member remained in his role as an entertainer, we could probably put up with him, but when he makes statements on subjects about which he knows nothing at all and, in the process, casts reflections on hon. members on this side without any evidence to back up what he says, or justification for his statements, we must think of him not as an entertainer but as a member of Parliament who is making statements that must be refuted.

Mr. Hooper, you were not in the chair when the hon. member was making the statements I am objecting to. In refuting what he said I shall have to stray a little from what would normally be regarded as the scope of this debate. I hope you will bear with me for a minute or two; it will not take very long to reply to the hon. member. He cast a reflection on my colleague, the hon. member for Barcoo, which I think was completely unjustified. If his statement received publicity it could reflect detrimentally on the hon. member for Barcoo. He said, "The hon. member for Barcoo talks about land matters in his electorate, but where does he live? He lives here in Brisbane and he goes up there once in a blue moon.", or used words to that effect. The hon. member for Barcoo has already spoken in the debate so he has no opportunity to reply. I know as a fact that the electors of Barcoo requested the hon. member to live in Brisbane, where they considered he would be able to give the best service to the whole of his electorate.

Let me make a brief comparison between the hon. member for Townsville South and the hon. member for Barcoo. The hon.

member for Townsville South represents an area of approximately five or six square miles. I do not know the exact area of the Barcoo electorate.

Mr. O'Donnell: 43,000 square miles.

Mr. DUFFICY: I am told by interjection that the hon. member for Barcoo represents an electorate of 43,000 square miles. My own electorate contains an area of 73,000 square miles. It would not matter where I lived in my electorate; I would not be readily available to the people in the remainder of the electorate. The same position applies in the electorate of Barcoo. I make that point in fairness to the hon. member for Barcoo, and to refute the ridiculous statement made by the hon. member for Townsville South. May I suggest that in future the hon. member should remain in his role as chief entertainer? If he does everybody will appreciate him. I suggest that he do not try to enter arguments on subjects that he knows nothing about.

Mr. Low: I think you have made the position worse.

Mr. DUFFICY: If the hon. member believes that I have made the position worse, he confirms my opinion about his intellectual ability.

We have heard a great deal about freehold tenure. The hon. member for Townsville South cast some reflections on the attitude of the Opposition towards this matter. When we on this side of the Chamber talk about freehold tenure, we refer to rural areas. We are not concerned about 32-perch allotments or anything like that. I agree with the hon. member for Fassifern that at one time leasehold tenure provided the best opportunity for people to build their own homes, as they could acquire a block of land for an outlay of £3. Circumstances admittedly have changed, but under the present freehold tenure system I do not know of any place where the ordinary wages employee can obtain a piece of land for an outlay of £3. I do not want to canvass this matter further, other than to stress the absurdity of the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville South.

On a previous occasion I had something to say about the brigalow scheme. I will not go into the matter deeply—the hon. member for Barcoo has dealt with it adequately—but point out that I then made some remarks which were very much in line with what was said today by the hon. member for Fassifern. The Treasurer at that time accused me of being a “knocker”. I agree with the hon. member for Fassifern that possibly we are trying to do too much too quickly, but the Government, having sowed the seed, must reap the harvest. I have nothing more to say about that.

My area is one of the remote areas of Queensland, and extends to the South Australian border. In that part of Queensland, as the Minister knows, people are not very concerned about 32-perch allotments; nor are they greatly concerned about areas with a 30 or 35-inch rainfall. In my electorate there are some areas that have not had one inch of rain in the last 12 months. I think the Minister will agree with that.

Let us consider the Government's policy with regard to that area, and what I think should be done. I have said on a number of occasions that the Government's policy on subdivision of existing leases is wrong. If we are to err at all in subdivision, we should err on the side of making areas too large rather than too small. The country in my electorate cannot be compared with the coastal districts. A great deal has been said about the present drought but drought is more or less a normal condition out there; we expect a drought, although possibly not as bad as this one, every few years. The subdivided area must give a margin of safety. We must not think of a living area in that part of the State as an area which in a normal season can provide a reasonable living for a man, his wife, and family. Even with a succession of good seasons, the minimum living area out there should be an area capable of maintaining a family, a married couple, and at least one other employee. When living the best part of 1,000 miles from the coast, a man naturally would want to take his wife and family for a holiday, away from the harsh climate and difficult conditions. It is essential, but he could not walk into Quilpie, Thargomindah, or Charleville and pick up Bill Smith on the street corner and say, “Come out and manage my property for a month while I take my wife and family down to the coast for a much-needed holiday.” He would not leave his property in that isolated area in the hands of somebody he knew nothing about, and obviously he would know nothing about anybody he picked up in any of those towns. In that country the landholder should have a married couple and one other employee on his property so that when he decides to go on a holiday he can say to the married man, “I will be away for a month. Look after things,” and know that he will do a good job. In addition, the married couple should have the assistance of another employee. When the landholder comes back, the married employee can take his wife and family away for a holiday.

When the Government decided to subdivide Nive Downs, for instance, it subdivided it into blocks of approximately 20,000 acres which, in my opinion, and in the opinion of most people who know anything about the West, are not large enough. The subdivision has been a failure. When I was in Charleville two or three weeks ago I was approached by two recent settlers who are absolutely broke because of drought conditions and the small size of their areas. One of the difficulties in the West at present, which is accentuating the drought problem, is that people are

compelled to over-stock substandard blocks in order to make a living. That country should have been designed to avoid overstocking. It should never have been designed in small living areas. Small areas and compulsory overstocking in South-western Queensland today lead to the destruction of edible shrubs, and when they have gone that country, unless something is done about it, will be a wilderness. The Minister need not accept my word for it. Let him go to the managers of responsible stock and station agencies in the district. They are men who spend a great deal of time out there and have much money invested in that country. They will tell him that today edible shrubs are being destroyed. Why is this so? It is happening because people are being settled on sub-standard blocks.

What I suggest to the Minister and the Government is that when they embarked upon their land policy in the West they were influenced very largely by the fact that prior to their coming to office the West had a succession of particularly good seasons. These lasted for seven, eight, and nine years, from the late 1940's till 1955 or 1956, when even places such as Thargomindah, where rainfall is usually from 8 to 10 inches a year, had falls of 35 inches. I know that very well. Out in that country sheep were even suffering from worm infestation and foot rot, which had never been known there before. Stock numbers were then three, four, and five times the number that had been carried in the previous 50 or 60 years.

When the Government implemented a subdivisive policy in that area, it was influenced by what had happened during the good seasons and failed to appreciate what usually happens in that country. I think the Minister will agree that I have consistently argued that his policy of subdividing these areas into selections that were in effect not economic units was wrong.

There is something else, too, that should be considered. A bare living area does not create employment except during shearing. Today shearers are spending in travelling and waiting time between jobs almost as much as they earn whilst shearing. The average time spent at a shed is little more than a couple of weeks. Where are people to obtain work in these areas unless properties are large enough to provide work? I am sorry that times does not permit me to develop this argument.

The Minister is particularly fortunate to have in his department such good officers. I represent a purely rural electorate, so it is only to be expected that I receive many requests from my constituents relative to land matters. Because of this, there are probably few hon. members who approach officers of the Department of Lands as frequently as I do. I want to say to the Minister that at all times I receive very courteous and efficient treatment from his officers, and I regard them as being at least the equal of any public servants in this State.

Any person, including the Minister, who deals with land deals with a very valuable commodity. It is only human nature for a person who has land to say, "What I have, I will hold", whether or not he is really entitled to hold it, and for others—and there are thousands of land-hungry people in Queensland—to say, "Well, I am entitled to some portion of the national estate." Therefore, I sympathise with the Minister and his officers in the difficult decisions that they have to make at times. No matter what decision they give, it will be criticised. On numerous occasions I have submitted cases to the officers of the department without going to the Minister. At times they have rejected my submissions; at times they have accepted them. I will say this for them: that when the applications have been rejected, they have been rejected strictly in accordance with Government policy, which, after all, is not laid down by them. I might complain about the policy of the Government, but I cannot complain about the decisions that the officers give in implementing that policy.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (3.53 p.m.): I could speak for some time on the splendid work undertaken by the Department of Lands. Therefore, if I am critical of certain facets of the Minister's administration, I trust that it will not be construed that I have nothing to say in favour of it.

I have a great deal of pride in being associated with various aspects of this type of administration over many years, and no-one will deny that Queensland is looking forward to and moving progressively towards a better land policy. My only wish is to see that this transition is effected, and, while I should not like to be thought to be a "knocker" for what I have to say, I should like to be thought to be a realist.

The hon. member for Fassifern, Mr. Muller, made a speech a short while ago along much the same lines as I intended making. Although I agreed with the observations that he made, there are certain matters on which we do not agree entirely, and possibly rightly so. Take, for example, the question of whether leasehold is preferable to freehold in rural areas. From my point of view, I believe that perpetual lease has its advantages; on the other hand, I readily acknowledge the security of tenure provided under the freehold system, and I prefer this tenure.

I believe that the matter of whether a particular parcel of land should be made available under freehold or perpetual lease tenure should, to a certain extent, be left at the option of the person who is taking up the land. I believe in the right of the individual, and I should like to see not the Crown make the choice, but the individual. So on that score, whilst both the hon. member for Fassifern and I believe that leasehold and freehold each have a role to play, their application may differ in our respective views.

I agree with many of the observations made by the hon. member relative to brigalow lands development. At the outset of this scheme, I think that the Crown tenant coming in with the minimum requirement in capital was under-capitalised to undertake development of a block which, when developed under the present Government concept, is highly over-capitalised. In other words, thinking along the same lines as the hon. member, I believe that £60,000 invested capital to run 800 head of cattle is not an economic proposition, but that is the concept of development laid down under this scheme.

How can these people, who have come into this project with a limited amount of finance, hope to extricate themselves from this mess without being able to sell when the position becomes desperate? I should say that in the majority of cases these people are starting well behind the "eight ball". Whether they encounter drought or reasonably good seasons, they will have an uphill job in making a success of this type of development because, again under the present concept of the development, it is not an economic proposition. Whichever way one looks at this scheme, it is a high risk and high capital venture and adequate capital is an absolute necessity. In fact, it is a pre-requisite to this type of development.

When this project was first mooted and the Commonwealth Government agreed to participate in the venture with the State, it was on the basis of a land development scheme, not a land settlement scheme; it was based on a venture that would increase rural production, which in turn, would attract export earnings in beef production. That was the basis of this project. This area of brigalow had been virtually undeveloped because two requirements were lacking. The first was security of tenure. As the hon. member said, people will not embark on the expensive development on a terminable interest lease. That is one reason why much of this land was left undeveloped. The other was, of course, that it was only during the post-war period that mechanised clearing has made the clearing of the area a practical and economical proposition.

Mr. Lloyd: Don't you think the market for meat might have a bearing on it?

Mr. LICKISS: Again I will agree with the hon. member. The fact that we now have a market that is virtually assured and that is making its way probably better than our strongest industry, the sugar industry, encourages people to invest money in it. Consequently, the concept of bringing about a real improvement in production is quite a valid and very worthy one. Improved tenure, I believe, has already demonstrated that there is no shortage of capital in the private sector. Already we have noticed, where auction blocks have been put up, that the upset capital value required by the Crown has been greatly exceeded.

Mr. O'Donnell: Doubled.

Mr. LICKISS: Doubled, and in fact, increased even beyond that mark. The terms and conditions for these auction blocks are far more difficult and onerous from the time point of view than are the conditions laid down for the assisted settlers.

The Commonwealth Government lays down the requirement that a minimum of 25 per cent. shall be made available by auction. It does not say that that shall be the maximum. A prudent Government might well have reversed the terms and laid it down that 75 per cent. should be made available by auction and, if necessary, 25 per cent. under the assisted scheme.

We have a demand but we have not kept up with the supply. Consequently, people are paying well above the upset capital value of the blocks. They wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to develop blocks because they know they have the capital. It is a job for big capital.

Mr. O'Donnell: There were only 15 bidders for the last four blocks.

Mr. LICKISS: That is all right. There were 15. Had we had 15 blocks there would have been 15 satisfied customers.

This is a responsibility which the Crown has undertaken. It is not necessary that this type of capital be made available for that class of development. The private sector can take care of that type of land development. Surely, by agreement with the Commonwealth Government, this much-needed money could have been put to better use. The provision of adequate access is an essential part of opening up the country. Let us not work out the project to the nth degree so that we are almost telling a person where he has to put his tank, his fences, and possibly his gate. That is taking it much further than was ever anticipated. That once you put a man on you have to control him is the type of thinking that is developing. One of the attractions to the person who buys a block of land is that he believes that as long as he complies with the conditions of the purchase he is free to develop the land as he wishes.

I have a soft spot in my heart for the assisted settler under the scheme. Not only have we used Crown funds to assist him at the outset, but now that he finds he is in difficulties we are putting in funds to prop him up. That will go on and on because it now becomes the Crown's responsibility to see that as long as these people are normal, prudent farmers they do not fail. I cannot disagree with that concept, although I think we were unwise in the original presentation.

In view of what the Minister has said, we now know that the Arcadia area is being developed and that consideration will probably be given soon to area No. 3. When I was there it was generally reported that area 3 will present difficulties not encountered in areas 1 and 2. Because of the difficulties. I

should not be at all surprised if the Government gave consideration to allowing even companies to come in. Companies were excluded from the original two areas. I understand that blackbutt suckering is presenting a great deal of worry to the scientists. I think it is an even greater problem than brigalow if it gets out of hand.

Before we embark on area 3, which it would appear will be more difficult to develop than areas 1 and 2, the Commonwealth and State Governments should have another look at the project. When we are crying out for developmental money I am not prepared to stand aside and see it thrown down the drain on a project that is doomed to failure before it starts. With the present concept of brigalow development by assisted settlers, I say categorically that I believe the scheme is doomed to failure. I feel very sorry for the people mentioned by the hon. member for Fassifern who have been encouraged to sell their sugar farms at Bundaberg and take part in this scheme. Because of the present climatic conditions people are having difficulty in disposing of their other assets to finance themselves in their new venture. These people should be treated with every tolerance before a clamp is put on them under the terms of their entry onto the new blocks.

The Minister said that the drought had caused many problems with brigalow suckering. I have always been under the impression that brigalow suckers require moisture, just the same as grass.

Mr. Sullivan: You have been misinformed there.

Mr. LICKISS: I do not think so. Brigalow suckers will grow without as much moisture as grasses, but they need moisture for virulent growth.

With reference to the treatment of suckers with 2,4,5-T, which is a derivative of 2,4-D, while it is a selective hormone, it is so wide in its effect that it kills virtually anything but grass. Therefore, in any area with a predominance of brigalow suckers that has now been sown with legume grass pastures, for example, not only will 2,4,5-T possibly wipe out the suckers but it will assuredly wipe out the legume. I am wondering whether this treatment is worth while. Scientists have told us over a period that the most effective method of brigalow treatment is to plough the land.

Mr. O'Donnell: That is not allowed for under the corporation funds.

Mr. LICKISS: That may be so, but that is one of the rigid controls with which I strongly disagree.

Mr. O'Donnell: The Commonwealth Government made those provisions.

Mr. LICKISS: No, it did not; quite frankly it did not. The money was made available for this development and the controls on the development were implemented

by the Land Administration Commission. In the progressive development of brigalow land there is no substitute for the plough and the formation of the proper seed-beds to handle the development in a workmanlike manner. The present concept is a hit-and-miss one; it is equal to saying, "If you are lucky you will make it, and if you are unlucky you have had it." Surely such a policy is contrary to the national interest, and in my view anything that is contrary to the national interest cannot be right.

The use of hormones 2,4,5-T, or 2,4-D, has a very bad effect on other plants which are not a nuisance; they kill virtually everything. I believe we could do this work much more effectively and far more cheaply with the plough.

Mr. Wharton: How do you plough the melon-holes?

Mr. LICKISS: It depends on the size of the melon-holes. Possibly some of the land that is extremely badly melon-holed should not have been developed.

Mr. Wharton: It is very good land.

Mr. LICKISS: If the hon. member looked at some of the land that is being cleared at the moment, I do not think he would be of that opinion. I know melon-hole country quite well and I know how it is treated.

Mr. Tucker: Most brigalow country is melon-hole country.

Mr. LICKISS: Yes, but some of it can be ploughed whereas nothing can be done with other parts of it.

On the matter of land development, we were proudly shown one area of 30,000 acres, where progressive development had been undertaken by a man and his sons. It was a sight for sore eyes. We were told that already part of the land had come up for resumption and would be allocated to other settlers. We are very concerned about farmers and their sons and keeping the sons on the land, and we asked what was to happen to the sons. We were told that one had already moved and taken up a virgin block and had to start from scratch, yet, from the original family holding, 15,000 acres were to be resumed and probably allocated to "Johnny from the city". I wonder about the bona fides of our claims that we want to encourage farmers' sons to stay on the land when we seem to be making it very difficult for some of them to do so.

I shall comment briefly on the conversion of leasehold to freehold, another matter raised by the hon. member for Fassifern. There are difficulties facing the department in this matter. Many of the surveys carried out in the past for the purpose of issuing grazing homestead leases and grazing selections were in some instances compass surveys and thus without the precision required under the Real Property Act. In

many instances, before those lands can be converted an authorised survey has to be carried out so that it can be registered in the Real Property Office. So there will be some delay there. The existing delays are causing a great deal of concern, however.

I am happy that the committee which is being formed to look into the whole problem of land valuation will consider the conversion of leasehold to freehold. From a valuer's point of view it is quite irksome to have a block valued by the Valuer-General, only to be re-valued without any great change of purpose, on a somewhat similar formula, and from a practical point of view on an identical formula, at a higher valuation. It must be admitted that there are appeal facilities. Both valuations go before the Land Court, which comes up with a different result again. I say that the Land Court does not perform the function it should rightly perform. I hope that certain recommendations will be made by the committee in order to streamline the appeal process.

The Minister was present at the opening of the cartographic display in which a lot of his officers participated. I cannot for the life of me see why, when we have a Surveyor-General controlling this technical department, he is not on the Land Administration Commission. Recently an engineer from the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply was appointed to it. A few days ago a committee was appointed to investigate river lands. How farcical it is, in a State such as this, that the Surveyor-General was not appointed. The Surveyor-General is a man who should know and who has in his department all the technical know-how, all the survey information, levels, and everything else required. Yet, for some unknown reason, he is considered just another officer in the Department of Lands. From the point of view of experience and qualifications he should be one of the best qualified officers in the department.

We have reached a ridiculous stage when the Surveyor-General has not a place on the Land Administration Commission. From the little I know of the brigalow venture, had the facilities of the Survey Office and the experience of some of the men who have spent years on this type of work been called upon, that development would not have experienced many of the difficulties it did. We are not using the Surveyor-General's staff as much as we should in these matters, which are vital to our State's development.

I hope my criticism of the brigalow scheme is not taken as direct antagonism towards anyone or any department. I hope it will be taken as an honest opinion of what was predicted. I hope the Minister remembers that before the scheme started I said that £60,000 would be required to turn off 800 head under the intended concept. The sorriest thing I have to say today is that what I predicted has come to pass.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) (4.15 p.m.): It was a little refreshing to hear the Minister blame the drought rather than Labour's previous government and legislation for many of the present difficulties. It was also interesting to note that various speakers have said that drought conditions are experienced in parts of Queensland every one or two years. I go further and say that every year some part of Queensland is in the throes of drought. I do not think that that statement by the Minister was a very strong branch for him to lean on.

Mention was made also of the slowing-down of developmental schemes, which is easily understood, and the fact that insects and lantana are being affected by drought. Here the drought is taking the kick that is usually aimed at the Australian Labour Party in these matters.

One of the first things that I wish to bring to the notice of hon. members has been mentioned already by other speakers. I refer to treatment of regrowth, and I propose to combine with it the treatment of noxious weeds and other pests in the control of which the Minister has said that aerial spraying and dropping of baits is a method being used by the department. I want to add a little to what has been said by saying that on two previous occasions in this Chamber I have mentioned the book "Silent World", and I should say that each year we are getting closer and closer to the situation presented in it.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha mentioned legumes and regrowth. We owe it to future generations to preserve the fauna and flora of this country. In Australia, particularly in Queensland, there are plants and animals not found anywhere else in the world. Are we, by a short-sighted policy, going to risk their destruction? I shall not be so dogmatic as to say that they will be destroyed. Are we even to risk their destruction merely to make a scheme work?

Mr. Fletcher: What particularly are you thinking of now?

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: I am thinking of wild life and vegetation whose natural habitat is Queensland. There is widespread pollution of the atmosphere in some areas of Queensland. Hon. members may recall that when I spoke during the passage of legislation to control tobacco diseases I mentioned an area near Dimbulah in which pollution of the atmosphere was so bad that people travelling through it in trains could feel their eyes stinging because of the concentration of poisons used to combat tobacco diseases.

Very much larger areas will now be subject to pollution by aerial spraying to combat regrowth over thousands of acres. Rabbit and dingo infestation is being attacked by the dropping of baits from aircraft. We are polluting the countryside and the

atmosphere, and we are doing it indiscriminately. As the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha mentioned, if we have made a mistake, do not let us make another in an attempt to overcome it.

The emphasis these days is on chemical warfare against insects and undesirable regrowth. The days of the pioneers are not very long past and those people, too, had to overcome pests and regrowth. Surely it would be possible to use again some of the methods that our forefathers used. Admittedly the cactoblastis has waged war on the prickly pear; but when I drove from Brisbane to Cairns recently I saw infestations of prickly pear beside the road, and I have also seen them near Ogmoo when travelling by train. If they are visible from the roadway or from the railway line, one can rest assured that there are large areas elsewhere that are even more heavily infested,

Mr. Tucker: That is the tree pear.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: Yes.

Mr. Camm: Tree pear does not do any harm.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: A close watch should be kept on things such as that. If possible, natural warfare instead of chemical warfare should be waged against pests, and I should like the Minister to keep that in mind if it becomes necessary in future to conduct a campaign against pests.

I am sure that the beef roads will play a part in the introduction of noxious weeds and undesirable growth along thousands of miles of highways in Queensland. Generally speaking, the roads are quite wide and, where necessary, quite a large amount of undergrowth has been taken down on each side of the road—in fact, in some instances it is cleared more completely than the brigalow scrub is cleared. But what will happen when transports travel thousands of miles along the roads and throw seeds into the cleared areas? This will raise problems not only for the Minister but for local authorities and graziers, because I am sure that one will soon see in these areas wild tobacco tree and all the burrs that are mentioned in the list of noxious weeds.

A fire hazard will be created, too, because cattle will not graze where there is rubbish and the grass will grow very high. Instead of there being a fire break, there will be a fire hazard on each side of the road.

I travelled along some of the beef roads only a fortnight ago, and seeds are beginning to sprout beside the roads in tracks left by the water carts and the other equipment used by the Main Roads Department and the contractors. With the wet seasons and the hot conditions in North Queensland, in another five years there will be a danger not only of noxious weeds spreading into adjacent lands but also of fire. Rank growth could militate against drainage, too, and creeks and

gullies with a small outlet allowing them to run freely under the road are likely to become blocked and the road will be washed away. This has happened previously, and it will happen again unless some precaution is taken to prevent the spread of noxious weeds in the areas served by the beef roads, whether in the North, South, or West.

Northern development is a subject that is of paramount importance to me, so I listened attentively when the Minister said, in introducing the Estimates, that a new policy would have to be introduced. I wondered as he was speaking just what he was referring to. Then, as other speakers developed the debate, I realised that area 3 of the brigalow lands scheme is, as the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha mentioned, doomed to failure. I am not saying that the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha is right, but there is in this situation a note of warning and it is a very ominous note.

If these ideas are so expensive and are doomed to failure it will choke off population from the North instead of having the effect of bringing people there. Instead of developing industries in the North it will have the reverse effect, and we will have the same old story of the far northern and far western electorates shrinking whilst the city areas are growing. The reason for that, of course, is the security available in the city and the lack of it in the outback and far distant areas.

Leaving that subject and getting on to something closer to my home, the Minister mentioned a reclamation scheme for building sites. I think I can include in that the sites in an area used by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission in a township called Walkamin. I made representations to the Minister relative to those building sites, which have been cleared of the huts that were there. There are formed roads, electric light and a water system; they are 10 miles from Atherton and the same distance from Mareeba. They are in an ideal area and subject to a low rating as compared with areas in Mareeba, which are rated exceptionally high.

I put to the Minister, by way of a question, that he have the 25 blocks involved valued similarly. I received the information that only eight or 10 of the blocks are to be offered. I think this is a move designed to create an absolutely fictitious market. If there are 25 blocks on which people have been living for years, they should be all valued similarly and all thrown open. I can go back as far as 1952 at least, when the first surveyors' camp was established there. These blocks have been lived on from then till 1965 and have passed every test from the point of view of drainage, road-works and other improvements.

Since there are 25 allotments there, why not offer the 25 and give people a chance of picking the allotments they want.

Mr. Muller: Where would they work?

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: In Mareeba. I have here a list of names of people ready to go to these sites.

Mr. Muller: Isn't it a bit far out?

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: Ten miles.

Mr. Muller: I know the place well.

Mr. Sherrington: I live 10 miles from Parliament House.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: The area could become a suburb of Mareeba or a suburb of Atherton. There is a choice of two places in which to work. I have here a list of eight people who are prepared to buy allotments there, yet of the 25 blocks 17 will be held in abeyance. We can only conclude that this action is being taken in the hope that prices will go up. The value of each of these 25 blocks is the same, but I will guarantee that the last of them will be sold at three times the price of the first. It is an unrealistic position, yet it will be allowed to go on and on.

All that would be required to have these blocks valued would be for the valuer to travel from his office in town and view the area. It would not take any more than 24 hours to value such a small and compact area and to have the valuations of the blocks submitted. I hope that on the next occasion the Minister in his wisdom will have all the blocks valued and put up at the second sale.

I should like to touch on the Rural Fires Board. Although there is quite a lot of material about the Rural Fires Board in the departmental report I am afraid that in the northern part of Queensland we hear very little mention of it. The tourist attractions of that part of the State are well known throughout Queensland and Australia, but unfortunately each year they are being destroyed by fires on the ranges close to the coast. I know of no more depressing and disheartening sight than smouldering ashes on each side of a mountain road in a tourist area. The Cairns people are very concerned about this destruction year after year. Following the denuding of the ground by fire, the heavy rains in the early part of the year erode the hillsides so that only subsoil remains for the regrowth of the vegetation. Since I have been in the North I do not remember one year when the Kuranda Range was not at least partly burnt out. Because of fires in the ranges around Edge Hill, the atmosphere in an area extending from Gordonvale to north of Cairns is smoke-laden for months of the year.

Mr. Muller: How would you prevent it?

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: Education is the only way. I do not mean education as we know it at school. The people on the land, whether they be farmers or householders, should receive a little assistance from the local authority. The existence of

a no man's land is one of the biggest reasons for fires in that part of the State. Neither the local authority nor the landholder wants to accept responsibility for the growth on the foothills. In order to keep snakes away from his residence the landholder decides to burn off. One match is all that is necessary to start a big bush-fire. If the local local authority provided assistance by clearing areas adjacent to farms and homes it would help to prevent the spread of fires which destroy the beautiful green vegetation in that part of the State which people go so far to see.

Although it has been a dry year in the north we are not suffering from drought to the same extent as other parts of the State. There is still plenty of green vegetation and the creeks are running. We are very fortunate in North Queensland but do not let us abuse that good fortune. We do not want to have the problem that is being encountered along the beef roads. Instead of lush vegetation there will be more noxious weeds. The Minister will then resort to more chemicals, and so the vicious circle goes on.

The next matter concerns the report of the Co-ordinating Board. I intend to deal specifically with the dingo menace. Recently I asked some inhabitants on Mornington Island if they were now receiving the dingo bonus, but the answer was still "No". I think all hon. members should realise the absurdity of the situation. Because Mornington Island is a mission station run entirely for Aborigines, and because it is devoted mainly to cattle production, the dingo menace goes unchecked because no dingo bonus is paid. The Minister has said that it is not in any local authority. Surely that is not a valid reason for not paying the dingo bonus. Surely the Minister can see that the dingo bonus is paid in an effort to eradicate dingoes and protect the pastoral industry. A number of hon. members have referred to the importance of this industry. I ask the Minister to reconsider this matter so that the people on Mornington Island may be treated on exactly the same basis as those on mainland cattle stations. The people on Mornington Island belong to Queensland; the white population vote in all elections and the coloured population in Federal elections. They are just as entitled to the dingo bonus as are people in other parts of Queensland. I again ask the Minister to give this matter further consideration.

There is a lag in the work in the Survey Office. The Minister said that he thought a partial departmental reorganisation was necessary. I know that the department is overburdened with work and I do not say, as some members have said, that the officers are not doing their job properly. This is a department of specialists and I would be the last one to say that an officer did not do his job well; I would resent anyone saying that I did not do my job.

Let us look at this impartially and see what can be done to overcome the lag. Is more staff needed? Should the department be decentralised? In one instance, an elderly farmer was anxious to sell his farm, half of which was held under freehold and half under leasehold. He paid £143 and thought that was all that had to be done for the job to be completed. To date, he has not even had a leasehold survey. People who come to the farm find that it is held under two separate tenures and they are dissatisfied and go away. That is the type of individual case that upsets us.

The ordinary householder with his little block of land waits 12 months or two years for conversion. He then asks his member of Parliament to hasten things along; he usually says in his letter, "I think the idea is to delay the change in tenure because of the valuation that is taking place." I think, in many instances, he is right. He finds that when the change-over takes place the valuation has risen and he has to pay far more than he expected.

(Time expired.)

Mr. SULLIVAN (Condamine) (4.40 p.m.): The introduction of the Estimates of the Department of Lands always invites a considerable amount of discussion. Invariably two points of view are put forward from opposite sides of the Chamber. It is incumbent upon me to pay my respects and express my appreciation to the Minister and his departmental officers. The people of Queensland realise that he has a very difficult portfolio and that he is honestly endeavouring to do a good job. In a State the size of Queensland with its varying climatic conditions, it is easy to realise that what applies in one part of the State does not necessarily apply in another.

I express my appreciation to the officers sitting in the lobby, namely Mr. Heffernan and Mr. Sallows, and also to the private secretary to the Minister, Mr. Bensted, and to Mr. Paul O'Gorman. Those gentlemen have been most helpful to me. I do not worry the Minister as much as I do those other gentlemen with matters affecting my constituents, but I thank him for the consideration given to my recommendations. Those officers are always most courteous and willing to help not only Government members but also Opposition members, and I have heard members of the Opposition express similar sentiments.

I join with other hon. members who paid a tribute to the late Mr. Brebner. Over the years I had a lot to do with him. The northern boundary of the dingo barrier fence runs through the northern part of my electorate. I did not agree with Mr. Brebner entirely on the line chosen for the fence. However, the fence is now there and will play a big part in the eradication of this menace. Either in groups or as

individuals, landholders have a responsibility to play a part in cleaning up this menace to primary industry.

I should like to dwell for a short time on the added development taking place in certain parts of my electorate. In the past four or five years tremendous agricultural development has been undertaken on some of the land that previously we were not prone to farm because it did not have the necessary soil structure. With the use of superphosphate and other fertilisers farmers are farming this country very successfully.

I think I have said before in this Chamber that when farmers first came to the Darling Downs they selected the black-soil plains, and then pushed farther west with the development of the brigalow country. The brigalow which extends from Jandowae to Chinchilla and north of Jandowae was opened in the early 1930's. I have referred to it on occasions as being possibly the best belt of brigalow country in Queensland. It was opened as dairy farms in blocks of 640, 320, and 400 acres and those who engaged in the industry have played a big part in the development of the district. It has some of Queensland's best wheat land; some people have changed from dairying to wheat-growing.

Mr. Hanson: There's a reason for that.

Mr. SULLIVAN: The hon. member for Port Curtis may know the reason in his area.

Mr. Hanson: It was your administration.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I always believe in speaking of areas with which I am conversant. They did not change over to agriculture, as the hon. member for Port Curtis by insinuation has suggested, because dairying was no longer economic.

Mr. Hanson: They were kicked in the tail by you people.

Mr. SULLIVAN: It is so much easier for one man to farm 500 to 600 acres than to carry on dairying, and possibly the return is as good, if not better.

With the demand for land, and following the Government's policy of closer settlement, it is good to see that farmers, with the assistance of scientists and by using trace elements, are now able to cultivate lighter country in an area with a suitable rainfall and suitably placed for the growing of wheat and other crops. I was amazed to learn that in the recent harvest farmers who once were loath to put a plough into this country have, with the use of fertilisers, been taking off crops of wheat up to, in some cases, 17 bags an acre, and averaging 10 to 11 bags. I mention this because only a few years ago this was considered to be inferior country. The farmer in Queensland is playing his part in making greater use of the land and, with the greater demand for land, this is most essential.

I was very interested in the comments of the hon. member for Fassifern on the treatment of brigalow regrowth. I think the story that I am about to relate bears telling for the benefit of hon. members who possibly have not had experience in this matter. Some of the most difficult brigalow country anywhere in the State is to be found north of Jandowae, going towards Durong. It is very melon-holey. It was considered to be unsuitable for agriculture, although it is wonderful fattening country. With the clearing of the brigalow scrub, there was very heavy regrowth of brigalow. I should like now to pay a tribute to some people who are doing a marvellous job in the development of this country. I refer to one gentleman who today is possibly nearing 80. He is Mr. Phil Swain, and he has done a remarkable job. He used the Sheiner Majestic plough, and, latterly, a Connor Shea twin-disc plough. He is getting rid of brigalow suckers and planting the land with lucerne, Rhodes grass, green panic, and similar grasses. The turn-off of fat cattle from that country is quite remarkable.

The statement of the hon. member for Fassifern that spraying of brigalow suckers was not very successful brought to mind the work of Mr. Swain's daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Stackpool. This is being done in smaller areas, admittedly, but it boils down to the fact that a person has to be prepared to work hard to develop land. Mr. and Mrs. Stackpool are applying 2,4,5-T with a wetting agent, and they are applying it with a knapsack spray. I was talking to Tom Stackpool recently and he told me that he has never had any difficulty in getting university students to come out there in their holidays. He pays them well and they are really prepared to work. In the hot weather they begin at 4 a.m. and work till 8 or 9, rest in the hot hours of the day, then go on again in the evening. I think full marks should be given to those lads. Mr. Stackpool told me that some of them are so keenly interested that they want to come back and see the results and continue the work. Stackpool's block was previously one of the dirtiest blocks in the locality.

Mr. Bill Hoare and his boys are doing some remarkably good work in developing similar country. It is very costly to clear—in some instances it costs up to £25 an acre—but it is virtually worthless when it is riddled with brigalow suckers. On country that only two or three years ago was a wasteland of brigalow suckers, the Hoares are now growing oats and barley, and breeding and crop fattening. Although the development is slow, I think that in the development of most land one has to hasten slowly, as I have said before in this Chamber. If in a lifetime one develops a property fully, one has achieved something.

Mr. Lickiss: In other words, you do not agree with this hit-and-miss idea of doing it in large blocks?

Mr. SULLIVAN: I think I am on record as saying that.

The Connor Shea twin-disc plough that I mentioned is revolutionising the development of the brigalow country. In June or July I saw a very bad piece of melon-hole country that was a thicket of tea-tree and brigalow suckers, 10, 12 or 14 feet high. Within 10 to 12 weeks of taking the country, young Arthur Nobbs, with his giant Connor Shea twin-disc, ploughed it 12 to 18 inches deep and buried most of the timber. He ran a leveller over it and pulled dirt into the melon-holes, and then sowed it with a King Seeder. Hon. members will realise that he could not use a tined instrument because of the timber underneath. When I saw the land 10 or 12 weeks after he went on to it, he had a crop of oats 18 inches to 2 feet high on which he was fattening cattle. That indicates what can be done on this type of country.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, Mr. Lickiss, interjected relative to large-scale development. I think I am on record two or three years ago as saying that I am not in favour of quick development of the brigalow areas. If a settler in these localities develops about 600 or 800 acres a year and things go well for him over a period of years, he will have some country that is well developed if he can get grass established properly. That is the first essential on brigalow land. However, in the Moura and Arcadia areas there has been a drought and, as a result, problems have arisen.

If one pulls a vast area of country, as some of these people have done, and does not get the grass established, he will be faced with the problem of regrowth. I think the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha said that brigalow suckers need moisture. There is no doubt they will grow whether they have moisture or not. The important thing is to get grasses established as these will retard the growth of the suckers. One can periodically lock paddocks and fire them, and knock the suckers back that way, and I think the Minister has mentioned that on various occasions, but, of course, climatic conditions play a most important part in this matter.

A lot has been said about the development of the brigalow country. I think we are to be commended on our approach to it. By way of interjection, I think, the hon. member for Barcoo said that provision was not made in the contract between the Commonwealth and State Governments for the purchase of farm machinery, and that it had to be purchased out of income. Anyone going onto one of these blocks expects income in the first year or two. It will be found that quite a number of these people, if they want to turn off the type of beef the market is demanding, will have to do that. It will be found that they will go into crop fattening, and in that way, over a period of years, will cope with the problem of regrowth.

Because of the drought at present prevailing in the South-West, the Central-West and the Western areas, many landholders are really in dire straits financially and are having one hell of a bad time. We all sympathise with them. We have every admiration for the courage they have displayed in their fight but I should like to make a suggestion to the Minister. In actual fact he may be adopting this policy, but so that the people will know they have his sympathy I think he should consider making a Press statement to the effect that where such lessees' rents are falling due the payment of such rents will be deferred.

Mr. Hanson: Did you bring this up in your Caucus?

Mr. SULLIVAN: The hon. member should not worry about whether I brought it up in Caucus. If he wants to treat this matter lightly, I do not. The first financial responsibility of people in these drought areas is to provide for their wives and families, and to keep their stock alive. If the Minister and his department will give consideration to the deferment of rent payments it will assist them greatly. Assistance has been given in the transport of fodder for starving stock but, if an announcement could be made by the Minister that he is prepared to defer the payment of rents, some of these people would possibly sleep better.

Another form of assistance would be temporary extension of leases in cases where such leases are due to expire. Consideration may have been given to these steps and they may have been implemented, but I put these suggestions forward on behalf of people in the drought-stricken areas. I have talked the matter over with my colleague, the hon. member for Roma, who, unfortunately, will not be able to participate in this debate as he is confined to hospital, and also with the hon. member for Balonne and others. I make that appeal not only on my own behalf but on their behalf.

I turn now to the subject of freehold tenure. For some reason known best to itself the Labour Party is opposed to freehold tenure. I draw the Minister's attention, as I have done before, to something I am not altogether happy about. I refer to the valuations being placed on land that lessees desire to freehold in my electorate. The Minister knows the area quite well because he and his Commissioner visited this country between Jandowae and Kingaroy. The values are excessive. I understand that the Land Court is sitting in Kingaroy today. I make the appeal to the Minister that notice be taken of the findings of that court. He is aware of decisions of the Land Appeal Court wherein valuations have been determined at £1 an acre whereas the department's valuers had assessed the value of similar country at £2 15s. and £3 15s. an acre.

Most of the people occupying this land are down-to-earth, hard-working sons of the soil. As I speak quite a few of them come to my mind. I can remember the Northcott brothers going out there when I was a boy. I can remember Stan Wieden going out there on a packhorse. In those days cattle were not worth very much. By their hard work those people have completely transformed that country. Because of their attention to breeding they are providing some of the best cattle going through the saleyards at Jandowae. In years gone by, before the demand for younger beef, the Northcotts, the Wiedens, the Maloneys, the Facers, and people like Graham Wilson and Colin McLachlan sent stock to the crop fatteners on the Darling Downs and in the southern States. When I was in camp at Bonegilla I recognised the brands on cattle that had been sent down to those fattening areas in the South. At an early stage those people recognised the wisdom of breeding good cattle. Since then they have endured many hardships to improve properties to their present standard. If they want to avail themselves of the opportunity to freehold their land, which the Government, in its wisdom, has given to them, it is grossly unfair that they should be charged a price far in excess of what it should be. When the findings of the Land Court presently sitting in Kingaroy are made known, I ask that notice be taken of them, so that people seeking conversion to freehold tenure will not be put to the added expense, worry and waste of time of going to the court to contest freehold valuations. Over the years forestry officers have made valuations which, in most cases, the lessees have been fairly happy about. If one department can assess an acceptable valuation, there is no reason why another department cannot do the same. I only hope and pray that the Department of Lands can do so in the future.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (5.5 p.m.): One would expect the debate on these Estimates to centre on leasehold and freehold tenures, but such has not been the case. I think the Government is realising that its policy of freeholding, rather than being of tremendous benefit for closer settlement, is not better than the form of leasehold tenure which operated in Queensland for many years. We realise that progress cannot stand still in any country and that policies which were necessary 50 years ago may not be so essential today. However, we still retain confidence in leasehold tenure, which was responsible to a great extent for closer settlement of many pastoral and grazing lands in Western Queensland in a time when money was not so plentiful and costs were not so high. It is possible that many of the people who settled on those lands would not have been able to do so if leasehold tenure had not been extended to them.

A great deal has been said about the small area of land held under freehold in Queensland but this factor is in similar contrast with the area held under freehold in

other States, such as South Australia, which was controlled by a Liberal Premier and a conservative Government for many years, and Western Australia.

Mr. Lickiss: There are vastly different land types in South Australia.

Mr. LLOYD: In Western Australia little more than 6 per cent. of the land is privately owned, and in Queensland it is also in that vicinity.

Mr. Lickiss: Again there are vastly different land types; they have only the coastal rainfall strip.

Mr. LLOYD: That may be so. The Government has introduced legislation extending freehold entitlement, but it has not made such a great deal of difference. There has not been a tremendous rush by people who have enjoyed the benefits of leasehold tenure for many years to convert to freehold. They are not anxious to surrender the benefits of leasehold.

I should not like to see the ownership of land in Australia transferred to overseas capital. A nation's most valuable asset is its land. There is not much argument against freeholding so long as the land is owned by people who reside in Australia. The great danger is when people sell land and foreign companies move in and gradually aggregate small areas into one large holding. The land is then alienated not only from the Crown, but from the people of this nation.

So far the tenor of the debate seems to have centred mainly on the Government's doubts and concern over the brigalow lands scheme. If we cast our minds back to 1962 we remember that certain warnings were given by hon. members on this side who were accused of being "knockers". At the same time, certain doubts were voiced by members on the Government benches that over-capitalisation would make the scheme virtually impossible for the first settlers to make a success of the venture.

It seems that the Government has set ideas on this project. It has been extremely weak in its negotiations with the Commonwealth Government. The weakness has been expressed in the agreement arrived at with the Commonwealth Government. Investigations were conducted by the Government, and at that time the Minister said he wanted "owner-drivers" on these lands. Eventually he had to surrender that policy following the Commonwealth Government's insistence that 25 per cent. of the land should be transferred to freehold tenure, and there were other conditions relative to the type of production. Because this Government was determined to make this a political issue, it rushed in, perhaps prematurely, and signed an agreement with the Commonwealth Government, an agreement that it was diffident about in the first place.

It is a reflection on the Commonwealth Government's policy that it is prepared to give to the States certain amounts of finance

on condition that they surrender so much of their sovereignty in these matters and surrender their policies to those dictated by the Commonwealth Government, although the latter has no responsibility in the administration of land matters and other matters relative to the numerous financial agreements entered into.

The hon. member for Barcoo made quite a constructive speech and indicated clearly that we hoped the scheme would succeed. We disagree violently with the Government's apparent determination to sacrifice the first settlers under any of these projects, and the £12,000 which they had to lodge as a deposit to develop the land. Goodness knows how much sweat will go into the development of that area. We can imagine the frustrations suffered by these men when they see that all of this money and sweat is expendable, and second settlers coming in. The only real success comes with the third settler, third generation, or third crop of settlers on country such as this.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha made a very constructive speech. But I shudder to think that this scheme could be doomed to failure, as he said it possibly could be. If it is doomed to failure it is the responsibility of the Government and the administration of the Government for considering that the first crop of settlers on those properties and their money are expendable, so that the success of the scheme depends on its development in 20 years' time. The actual success will not come immediately, or with the second settler; the third settler will be the man who gains the advantage and the benefits which come from the land and the development carried out by the first and second settlers.

This attitude on the part of the Government is not confined to the brigalow lands scheme. It was evident in other schemes, too. The scheme for dairying settlement at Gibber Gonyah, near Theodore, is another example of the complete neglect of the interests of first settlers. The first settler is an important man. Country cannot be developed unless men are settled on the land. People are entitled to expect that the Government will give them the greatest possible consideration. First settlers are the important people who develop the land and spend money on it, but they reap no great advantage from their work and money. When the Labour Government was defeated in 1957, only one settler was established on the Gibber Gonyah land. That land had been advertised by the Department of Lands—I do not blame the administration of the Department of Lands for this—as land that was suitable for opening up as dairying land with already prepared irrigation works. It was claimed that a settler could go onto that land and immediately become a dairy farmer with rich prospects ahead of him. That was the tenor of the advertisements in the various newspapers and gazettes.

On the advice of the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply this land was developed and irrigation projects were carried out. It was then handed to the Department of Lands for advertising and opening up as a dairying project. People came from other parts of Queensland and other States and accepted leasehold tenure of the land and settled on it. Subsequent investigations carried out by the Department of Primary Industries, which was never consulted in the first place, proved that that land was not suitable for dairying. It has now been found, on scientific investigation of soil types and irrigation, that the land is unsuitable for irrigation. Yet the settlers on this project are unable to transfer to any other form of farming because their money has been obtained from the Agricultural Bank, which will lend money for dairying only.

A mess of Government administration is involved—from the Irrigation and Water Supply Department to the Department of Primary Industries to the Department of Lands to the Treasury. There are four departments handling matters that concern one settler.

These settlers have been told by people in the administration that the Government is not so much concerned with first settlers; if they do not make a success of it, the second or third lot of settlers will. There is an indication of the Government's complete disregard of the interests of first settlers. What real estate agent, for instance, could advertise land as being suitable for a specific purpose and not be taken through the courts of law with demands for compensation if the land was found subsequently to be unsuitable for the purpose originally specified? A court of law would uphold a charge of misrepresentation against any private organisation or business undertaking that behaved in such a way, and adequate compensation would be awarded to those who suffered. But the Government will not.

I visited Gibber Gunyah 18 months ago at the invitation of the settlers. That was not my first visit to parts of Queensland as a result of complaints against the Government. I have made visits to North and Central Queensland as a result of similar approaches. I investigated the complaints from Gibber Gunyah by a personal visit and discussion of the matter with the settlers there. On my return, instead of making it a political matter, I communicated direct with the Premier and asked him to have an investigation made. I knew that the Minister for Lands had been there prior to my visit. He had in fact offered the settlers additional areas of land in an endeavour to compensate those in the dry areas, but that was not enough.

The land is completely unsuitable for the use to which it was to be put. It is unsuitable for flood irrigation as it is impossible to maintain permanent levels at any time to allow it to be of any benefit. Many thousands of pounds have been put into the land by the original settlers. The Government has

stood by and allowed some of them to leave. Others have sold and left with little of their original capital remaining. In other cases they have had to walk off and leave the land in the hands of the Agricultural Bank. They cannot go into any other form of production. They cannot grow cotton or any other crop unless they obtain permission from the Agricultural Bank. Any returns that they may receive are held by the Agricultural Bank in escrow against their indebtedness. They are charged exorbitant rates by the Irrigation and Water Supply Department for the supply of water. It is impossible for them to see any hope of getting out of their commitments to the Agricultural Bank and private banks, which help them occasionally.

Those are matters that should be given greater consideration by the Department of Lands. The Land Administration Commission is an organisation capable of undertaking the task of providing land tenures. It is composed of men with the capacity to carry out all the administrative work involved in land settlement. The main difficulty seems to be the division of power between various departments and the lack of liaison between them. The brigalow country, for instance, is being devoted to the growing of beef and its export from Australia. That land is considered suitable for this purpose. Apparently the preparatory work that was required was neglected because neither the Department of Lands nor the Land Administration Commission realised that it was necessary. I believe that there should be some form of liaison between the various departments so that they will have available to them all possible information from experts before any future land openings are undertaken. The interests of the first settlers on large areas of land in Queensland should not be neglected merely because the Government considers that it is impossible for first settlers to make a complete success of their undertaking and that this will come only with the second or third settlers on any block of land.

I shall refer briefly now to the development in the metropolitan area and in provincial cities, in particular, of areas of land owned by the Government. During the last 15 years there has been a great deal of speculation in land in this State. Large companies have been formed and have paid exorbitant rates of interest—anything up to 16 per cent.—on debenture loan raisings and then purchased at exorbitant prices large areas of land in Brisbane and on the South Coast. They have subdivided that land, paid for the improvements, and eventually sold the allotments to people—mostly young people—in the community wishing to build houses.

The Government of Queensland has a tremendous reserve of Crown land in town and suburban allotments—perhaps the Governments of other States have, too—that could be sold to young couples. It is an unfortunate feature of the present financial arrangement between the Commonwealth

and the States that the limitation of funds does not make it possible for Governments to embark upon the development of much of the land that they now hold. This has left the way open for many speculative companies to be formed and has led to a tremendous inflation of land prices in this State. In the next four or five years the result of the big increase in the birth rate in the late 1940's will be seen when people between the ages of 21 and 30 years will be married and will wish to buy land and build houses for themselves. As I said earlier, the Government has land available to it, but it is an unfortunate feature of the financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States that the Government can reply by saying, "There is insufficient capital to enable us to develop the land."

Many of the private companies that are undertaking this type of land development are paying anything up to £1,000 an acre, which immediately involves a price of £300 for each housing allotment within the acre. The Government has a good deal of land on which this original capital expenditure would not be needed. In other words, the Government, without paying 10 per cent. or 16 per cent., or whatever it might be, for the capital used in the development of the land, without having to pay the original £200 an allotment for the land, could, if it secured the necessary capital, develop it and offer it to young people in the community at prices that would enable them to go ahead and build a house of their own. Young couples are almost prohibited from building houses at present because they have to pay £1,000 to £1,250 for a reasonable allotment.

Mr. Lickiss: If the council has its way, the cost of development will be £780.

Mr. LLOYD: That is a sore point with the hon. member. The council's ordinances have been put through and submitted to the Government only recently, and they have received a good deal of publicity.

In 1959 Alfred Grant Pty. Ltd. opened an estate at Keperra—this was before Mr. Jones became Lord Mayor—and the council at that time insisted that the land should be sewered. The company had to put a sewerage treatment plant in and all the rest of the works required by the council ordinances at the present time. They did that and the land is now sewered. What is the difference between that procedure by the Groom administration and what is being done by the Jones administration at present? I cannot see any difference.

I think there is a financial responsibility on the Government to introduce a form of subdivision. I see the Minister looking at me. I realise that some subdivisions are being undertaken with money coming from the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement and much Crown land has been opened in this way. The subdivision of Crown land

is proceeding in Cairns and Mackay but insufficient consideration has been given to the explosion in demand. By 1970 it will be impossible for young people to secure land at a reasonable price. The position is not peculiar to this country; it is causing concern in most countries in the world.

A great deal of concern is being expressed at the fact that people in the middle-income group cannot afford the price of land or the rent for a reasonable type of home. To overcome this position it is essential to make land available.

At the present time in the United States of America the emphasis is on the subdividing and development of land by public utilities rather than by private enterprise. The Federal housing administration in America is advancing money to State Governments and public utilities to develop land owned by the State for use for residential purposes. That is being done in many towns and cities in that country. At least they are tackling this problem as it should be tackled.

In Australia we are handicapped somewhat by the fact that land development companies can go to a bank or an insurance company and borrow money at exorbitantly high rates of interest to do this developmental work, whereas the State Government has to take its capital from loan moneys advanced through the Loan Council. It is a ridiculous situation in such an important matter and it should not be allowed to continue.

I realise that Queensland has failed to accept its full entitlement of money under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, which could be utilised in opening up much Crown land. In the last three years the State Government has accepted no more than 7 per cent. of the total Australian allocation for this purpose, whilst other States in the Commonwealth have been going ahead with schemes for opening up land. Some people may call it socialism in land use, but the Playford Government in South Australia created the town of Elizabeth and provided all the amenities required. It involved that Government in considerable expense but it was expense that was readily convertible into recurring dividends.

In many of our provincial towns and cities there is land that could return the State Government a substantial dividend if it embarked upon a scheme of offering it to land-hungry young people in the community who require a home of their own at a price they can afford—in other words, give them an opportunity to acquire land by undercutting the exorbitant prices demanded by land development companies whose speculation in land has caused the inflation in land prices in Queensland over the last 15 years.

(Time expired.)

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Lands) (5.29 p.m.): I think it appropriate that at this stage, while the comments of hon. members are green in my

mind, I acknowledge what has been said and perhaps add a comment or two of my own.

I should like to reassure the hon. member for Kedron of the extent of my own concern about the important matter he has just been speaking about, namely, the price of residential allotments. As he has said, it is a matter of concern all over the world. Even in the United States, where something was done about the matter, the authorities are still concerned about the price at which they are able to make allotments available. Unfortunately, one cannot merely wave a magic wand and produce cheap building allotments. It is a matter that has concerned us over the years, and we have done as much as we could financially to help relieve the situation. Subdivisional costs are quite high under modern conditions. Generally speaking, it must be recognised that the price of building allotments, as with everything else, is determined by the law of supply and demand. If we try to interfere too much we get into something of a tangle.

I assure the hon. gentleman of my concern over this matter. If there is anything I can do to help in future it will be done with a great deal of goodwill because it is a very important matter. I agree that the young man starting out in life has to accept a very big responsibility in meeting a capital charge of £1,000 or £1,500 merely to get the land on which to set the stumps of his house. It is a very worrying business but it is part of the picture as we see it at the moment. It is the responsibility of all of us to do everything we can to ameliorate the incidence of high values.

What titillated my interest in the speech of the hon. member for Kedron were his remarks about Gibber Gunyah. He related that scheme to the brigalow development project. Those hon. members who were here in the days when the Gibber Gunyah scheme was first mooted will have vivid recollections of what was said by the hon. member for Fassifern, Mr. Alf Muller, who later became Lands Minister in our Government. At that time he said many of the things across the Chamber to the then Minister, the Hon. T. A. Foley, that the hon. member for Kedron has said today. He said, "This land is not suitable for the purpose for which you are opening it."

Mr. Lloyd: Mr. Muller perpetuated that scheme.

Mr. Fletcher: It was not a matter of perpetuating it. The whole thing was already cut and dried. Actually it was not a matter for my department, but one for the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply. It was the responsibility of that department, even though my department was used for surveys.

Mr. Lloyd: You are passing the buck.

Mr. Fletcher: Not at all. Who wouldn't pass the buck, anyway, in a situation like this? By implication the hon. gentleman has criticised me. If he is conscientious and truthful, I suggest that he look back at the criticism offered by us at that time. I thank him for acknowledging the fact that I went up there to help these people get out of their difficulties. I doubled the areas of some of them; I took some of them out of it altogether; I allowed some to buy the land of others; we found land in other areas and transplanted some of the settlers. From what the hon. member for the area has said, it would appear that we did a pretty satisfactory job. I know that there are still unsatisfactory conditions there. I realise that some men have spent the best years of their lives in an environment that does not compensate them for the work they have done.

I hope, and confidently believe, that the brigalow scheme has nothing in common with the Gibber Gunyah scheme. Using the Gibber Gunyah scheme as a standard by which to judge, one would immediately say that the brigalow scheme is too big, that it is so big that it is quite likely that the capital required, the work required and the time required to bring it to fruition will be beyond one man's capacity to undertake and achieve.

I am not dogmatic about this being a perfect certainty, or any thing more than a hope. My attitude is that if we attempt something we may get something out of it if we get the right sort of settlers. Even if we made mistakes in our planning—and I do not think we have made too many mistakes—this is something which, in contrast with Gibber Gunyah, stands out like a beacon light. At this stage, I will not say it is anything like a failure.

While I am on this point I think it is a pity that hon. members who should have taken the trouble to find out the facts about the brigalow scheme should dogmatically make statements here which will, by their effect, jeopardise the success of some of the very fine citizens we have up there—those starting on a job which will really test them under circumstances of drought which have made it all the harder. There is nothing worse that a member of Parliament can do to a section of the community than to state publicly, "They are done for before they start; they have not a hope; the scheme has never been any good; it has turned out as I predicted." The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha did that, and I think it is a pity he did. At least the hon. member for Fassifern has as background the fact that he has always had this feeling about it and he said, in fairly moderate terms, that he had his worries. For the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha to arrogate to himself a right—which I do not concede to him—of knowing what he is talking about with respect to the brigalow land and to say, "I am very sorry to have

to say that what I predicted about this scheme—that it would be a failure—has indeed come to pass”——

Mr. Walsh: You be careful, and don't start another war.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am not starting a war. If this is a war, I am proud to be in it. I do not mind being in the front line.

Mr. Duggan: You are just protecting your flank.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am just protecting my flank.

I have never made any bones about the brigalow scheme being a tough assignment. I have used the words, "Blood, sweat and tears, and years and years of hard work" for the men to whom we gave the hard job of making a success of it. If they make a success of it they will reap the inestimable reward of being independent men who have earned their independence as their right.

An Opposition Member: I doubt if the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha has been up there.

Mr. FLETCHER: Heaven knows!

Mr. Lickiss: I have been up there six times.

Mr. FLETCHER: That could be so.

I have never made any bones about its being difficult. I have never said it was a cut-and-dried business from the start. I have never suggested to any of the men who asked my advice about it, "Yes, this is a good thing; if you can get into it you cannot fail; you could not possibly make a mistake in this." I have never done that. I have said, "The rewards for this are splendid if you have what it takes and if you are not too unlucky with the conditions you will run into." I have never made any bones about the fact that anywhere in Queensland we are likely to run into a drought. I am a farmer myself, and we plan on the basis that every few years we have a drought. The brigalow scheme was planned on that basis.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, which put the rule over this area before we went on with it, came up with a report that was more glowing than any I would have come up with, yet it was warned specifically to take into account the incidence of drought and the recurring cycle of good and bad seasons. It took them into account, and the budgets which were published, and on which the findings were based, took all this into account. All in all, the Bureau came up with this reply: "It is a good thing; it is worth putting money into; it is worth putting in men with the guts to go into it as long as they have something in the way of experience and money, in the expectation that they will make a success of it."

Mr. Walsh: Why do you allow the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha to get under your skin?

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not. Nothing can get under my skin; I am as calm as possible. I am just trying to persuade hon. members to be on my side in this matter of the brigalow settlement.

The hon. member for Barcoo and I were on the brigalow settlement the other day. It would do a lot of hon. members in this Chamber much good to go out there and see the type of men there and the conditions they are putting up with. If that were done we would not get the reaction that comes from not knowing what one is talking about and not regarding the effect one's words will have on others. The people who are working in the brigalow belt are entitled not to be deliberately discouraged. The psychological effect of fighting this sort of fight, with people on the side-lines predicting your ultimate failure is not attractive. I do not think any white Australian, or any other sort of Australian, should be in this category. I am sure that some hon. members opposite agree with me.

Mr. Lickiss: The statements I made were made in the company of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and the Treasurer by some of the leading lights in the brigalow country.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is not what the hon. member said here. He said it was a failure. He said he had predicted it would be a failure and that he was sad indeed to tell those poor——

Mr. LICKISS: I rise to a point of order. I have been incorrectly quoted by the Minister. I said that I felt it was doomed to failure in its present concept relating it to assisted settlers.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am happy to have the hon. member's confirmation that I heard him correctly.

I thank the first speaker, the hon. member for Barcoo, for his tribute to my old friend Jack Brebner. It was a well-turned and well-deserved tribute.

The hon. member for Barcoo is opposed to freehold. I respect his principles, and I know he respects mine. I believe in freehold for reasons which I believe are good.

Mr. Walsh: Your reasons are not very sound.

Mr. FLETCHER: My reasons are 100 per cent. sound, and nothing any hon. member has ever said has disclosed the slightest flaw in them.

The hon. member for Barcoo suggested that the drought had not been taken into account when we decided on the scheme in toto. This is not so. This is one of the things we are always interested in. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics was told

that this place experienced drought, and the Bureau took it into account in its figuring, and it is there for all to see.

Mr. Walsh: I think you said that yourself when you were talking about it.

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, of course I did.

The hon. member for Barcoo deplored the fact that we had auctioned certain of the brigalow areas. This is not so terribly unreasonable. It is a big unimproved area and getting it into a different scale of production, into very intensive production, was a good thing. A lot of public money had to go into this scheme. We had to build schools, roads, and many other amenities which go to make life worth living. It was not unreasonable that we should take a small proportion of the area to get some of the necessary funds since we are not endowed greatly with money.

This was not unreasonable. It did not absolutely wipe out the owner-driver principle, by which I still stick. Many of the areas were bought by the sort of people I referred to as owner-drivers, but not all of them. However, it does not hold them out of the scheme, although at any auction—it does not matter whether it is at the Railway Department for unclaimed goods or any other auction—the man with the money has the advantage. If we wiped out this principle of auction or had some scheme which precludes auction merely because it gives an advantage to the man with the money, I do not know where we would be.

Mr. O'Donnell: There were 22 people deprived of the opportunity of getting a block at your upset valuation.

Mr. FLETCHER: At any auction the man with the money precludes the other fellow from getting something because he can bid more for it. There is nothing to stop a man with money from buying a leasehold property now. In this case the Government took advantage of the fact that there were probably people with capital waiting to invest in this way, and we would have been foolish not to encourage them, especially when they were coming from other States. I thought it was a very good idea to attract people with experience and money and the desire to spend it in the brigalow country, and it was a good thing for the State that we did so.

Mr. O'Donnell: I objected to the Commonwealth's imposing that policy on you.

Mr. FLETCHER: Then do not put it on that basis. Say that we agreed to it. Quite a lot of our own people thought that the auction system was quite a good one, and I do not think it should be deplored as something imposed on us. The brigalow belt is an immeasurably better asset than it was before. If all of it had been auctioned, it would have been better for Queensland than leaving it as it was. It could not have been left untouched.

One hon. member suggested that it remained as a large unexplored and undeveloped area because it did not have security of tenure. I am not sure which hon. member said that. That statement is not at all true. Other parts of brigalow country around Miles and Wandoan and along the western line towards Goondiwindi were well developed as leasehold land. I do not swallow the guff about leasehold tenure being an absolute impediment to land development. I have never said that, nor am I stupid enough to think so.

Mr. Walsh: It is good to have that frank admission from you.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am quite honest about it. There is far too much blaming lack of development on certain things, one of which is lack of secure tenure. Any amount of first-rate development was done on land held under leasehold tenure. The hon. member who suggested that the lack of development in areas 1 and 2 was the result of insecure tenure was talking through his hat. There was no way of getting into those areas. It was only when the Government spent a lot of money on roads that it was possible to get to them and really develop them.

The hon. member for Carnarvon is, as I expected, a believer in the freehold principle. Although I do not take back anything that I have said about leasehold tenure, I still believe that there is something in men that makes them like to have their blocks of land freehold. Irrespective of whether that is a good and validly held belief, the fact is that that is how I feel. The hon. member also has my belief about the desirability of guarding against aggregations.

Mr. Walsh: He has done all right on leasehold.

Mr. FLETCHER: Exceedingly well. It did not stop him from becoming a splendid settler in the area where he lives.

Mr. Walsh: Quite true.

Mr. FLETCHER: I agree with what he said about aggregations. I think the worst thing that can happen in any country is to have aggregations fall into the hands of big companies or landholders.

Mr. Walsh: This freehold land will.

Mr. FLETCHER: There is in the legislation a condition that at least goes a long way towards preventing it. The new freeholding provisions contain a condition that to a great extent controls undue aggregation.

The hon. member for Carnarvon also paid a tribute to my officers. It was well deserved, because they are very fine servants of the State. He also asked for greater co-operation between the Department of Forestry and the Department of Lands in freeholding matters. That is what we are aiming at, and what we think we are getting.

Of course, it is not easy to bring this about. I have not enough officers—and I do not think the Department of Forestry has, either—to cope with the spate of work that came in following the opening of freehold possibilities. This was something that perhaps should have been foreseen, but it is difficult to meet because trained officers cannot be obtained quickly. It is, however, a situation that can be explained.

I am happy to note that the hon. member now approves of the barrier fence. I think I can remember that at one time he felt it was a bit of a white elephant.

Mr. Walsh: You were of that opinion yourself at one time.

Mr. FLETCHER: No; I always believed in keeping the dingoes out. I thought it was far better to do that than to chase them around with traps and guns after they had got in.

The hon. member for Carnarvon said that the price brigalow land is bringing at auction is too high. I have my own worries relative to the auction sales, and I do think some of the bidders at auction have gone a little too high. The hon. member suggests that to some extent they may be encouraged to do this because they are given ten years in which to pay, and this may be true, too. However, as hon. members know, that is only because of the Government's desire to assist during the difficult first stages those people who have not a lot of money to put down in a lump sum. There are two points of view on this, and I am not sure that I do not stick to the one that motivated us in making the payment possible in ten years. The money that is then channelled into development could probably be put to much better use in getting the country in order than it would be if it were spent in a lump sum on a complete freeholding payment originally.

Mr. Walsh: Why don't you make a loan available to home builders on the same terms, without any interest?

Mr. FLETCHER: I have not enough money available to me to enable me to do that; I have not enough for the brigalow scheme. I should like to have about ten times as much money and ten times as many settlers. Then we should really see some development!

The hon. member for Carnarvon said something that struck a response in me when he referred to the effect of the drought on the edible trees in the West and the possibility of regeneration, or assisted regeneration. This is far more important than most people realise. The drought, in conjunction with the chainsaw, has been responsible for the complete denudation of big areas of the West of trees edible by stock and sheep. This is deplorable because the West is in danger of losing a great deal of its protective cover.

A few months ago I said something to this effect and it was published in the Press: that some day this Government, or in fact any Government, would have to take its courage in its hands and make some sort of regulation of the stocking of vulnerable western areas that may be badly damaged by overstocking. There was an immediate hostile response that still has not quite died down, but I think any intelligent and responsible Government must keep this in mind. If western areas, with their frequent dust storms and infrequent but heavy rains, are denuded of trees, it is the Government's responsibility to see that tree cover is not completely wiped from the face of the earth. If this is allowed to happen, we shall do what the Americans did in some of the drier areas of their country and make a dust bowl of what is a reasonably fertile area. It is being done already in some parts of Queensland, and I do not intend to be bluffed out of taking action if it seems necessary. I think this is something that the Government may have to do in the interests of keeping Queensland intact, so to speak.

The remarks of the hon. member for Carnarvon about stock routes interested me very much because this, too, is a matter of concern to my department. As the hon. member said, fewer stock routes are needed now and it is not necessary for them to be so wide, and fewer reserves are needed. It is a question of making better use of them, and the department has already taken action in this direction by making better use of stock reserves, water reserves and town commons in the West. They must not be allowed to become infested with weeds or become merely big areas of grass or growth of an unproductive type that harbour vermin of various kinds and are only a fire hazard—in short, that are not usefully employed in the interests of primary industries. Some shire councils do not co-operate fully with the department, of course, and say that, whether the department likes it or not, they cannot do without them. We are not always sure just what sort of use is being made of them; some of it is completely unofficial, I am sure.

The hon. member for Townsville South, who has a tremendous and very entertaining capacity for making a speech out of nothing, said that we were on the top of an aggregation boom or something, and he then went on to say that he had not heard about the clauses in the Land Acts which are, to some extent, safeguards against that. He then gave us about a quarter of an hour on the fearful mess—the hotch-potch—we have on our hands in respect of mining leases. He was not too sure what they were but he said they were a mess and a handicap. He did not tell us in what way they were a mess or a handicap. He did not know that I had not had any sort of complaint about them at all. On the contrary, I have had singularly little trouble. I know there are things that need to be done in

respect of them. Indeed, conversations have been going on between my department and the Department of Mines in regard to rectifying certain anomalies and unsatisfactory relationships between the two departments. Generally speaking, they are not any real trouble; but from the tenor of the hon. member's speech one would think that something terrible was happening right now.

Mr. Walsh: The talks are still going on?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes.

Mr. Walsh: They were going on 40 years ago.

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, and little progress was made under the hon. member who interjects.

Mr. Walsh: Look at the files and see.

Mr. FLETCHER: I have noticed the confusion in the files, with the hon. member's initials underneath. Usually it was confusion worse than ever confounded, "E. W."

The hon. member for Townsville South is also very much in trouble with the sports ground in his city. Of course, he sniped a little at the Townsville City Council, but we expect that and would not recognise him in this Chamber unless he did it.

The sports ground is not a reserve as the hon. member suggested; it is a deed of grant in trust. It is a title that it is possible to mortgage and it was given to the trustees for the purpose of helping them to raise the money they need for the purposes mentioned by the hon. member.

The North Queensland Rugby League is a fairly active body and recently we have been actively engaged in inviting the two sporting organisations in Townsville to put representatives on the body of trustees. I think we added our own Land Commissioner and a member of the local council. It was not the hon. member for Townsville South. I think it was Mr. Smith, and I think we can leave it to those people to do a good job of common-sense administration in the interests of the sporting bodies in Townsville.

The hon. member for Fassifern, of course, is always worth listening to because he knows most of the problems relative to the administration of the Department of Lands. He is keen, and always has been, on noxious weed control, and this principle of a stitch in time is a good principle under which to operate in controlling noxious weeds. That is my own feeling, and I agree with him entirely. He is still worried about *Harrisia cactus*. He, of course, initiated the only effective action that has ever been taken against it and it is still going on. The weed is still not completely under control, but what we are doing we are doing hopefully and in the knowledge that at least we have not slipped back. In many areas, I think are well ahead.

The hon. member wanted to know the cost of spraying with 2,4,5-T. I think it is about 23s. 6d. That would be as near

as I could get to the average cost of spraying with 2,4,5-T. It has not been completely proved as a wholly successful experiment, but it is fairly good. The hon. member for Barcoo has seen some of it. It is not what would be called a 100 per cent. success, but it is not bad and it may be the reason for a successful break-through. This could be the beginning of a new successful technique for destroying brigalow suckers.

[Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.15 p.m.]

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member for Fassifern was rather worried that his application to freehold was taking a long time. Although I have to admit that sometimes there are over-long delays with freeholding applications, I am told on inquiry that the hon. member applied in 1962 but later asked that his application be withheld or withdrawn, and then again later decided to proceed with it. Somewhere the lines of communication were short-circuited and his desire to carry on was not registered on the file in my department. Whose fault it was, I do not know; I am not saying it was the hon. member's. His desire to get some agreement with the Department of Forestry on the valuation of timber is still holding up the finalisation of his freeholding procedure.

His expression of opinion about the value paid by the brigalow settlers—both the settlers who are helped financially and those who buy land at auction—is one which, to some extent, I share. On no account would I want people to over-bid for land to the extent that they would use most of their available capital for the purchase of the land to the detriment of their later programme.

Several hon. members have referred to the value of the land. We are supported by the fact that a number of men, including four in one auction, have bought adjoining land. To the extent that this will produce aggregations I deplore it, but it shows what men experienced on the land, who have lived on the property themselves, and who know the value of it, from their own experience of years and years are prepared to pay for the land. On one occasion four men purchased blocks that had originally been part of their holdings but had been taken from them in the process of acquiring land for the brigalow scheme. If anyone anywhere could be relied upon to have an idea of what would be a reasonable thing to pay for that land, these were the men, and they paid a considerable amount in excess of what we had put on the land as an upset price.

Mr. Dufficy: They could be looking to the future.

Mr. FLETCHER: Precisely.

Mr. Dufficy: They had their security, and they might be looking to the future with regard to land values.

Mr. FLETCHER: Exactly. That is precisely what anyone who buys land would be looking for. It is the obvious thing to do for any man likely to purchase land.

Mr. Dufficy: The person purchasing it now cannot look to the future to the same extent as the person who is already established.

Mr. FLETCHER: In this case, as far as I can see, there is no distinction. It is all a matter of how much one can purchase land for. It matters a little how much money a person has, but it does not matter who buys the land. In the long run, in its productivity, the land has to warrant the price paid for it. If it is not good for one man it is not good enough for another—admitting, of course, that some men are better than others. That is intrinsic in all land occupation and ownership.

The hon. member was interested in the wallum land, and he said it was necessary to spend £15 an acre to bring it into production. I think he under-wrote the amount; it may be considerably more than that. I think it costs twice as much as that and, if he knew, to that extent his worry would be greater than it is at the moment. The root of our desire to get people like the tropical cattle-breeders onto this sort of land is to learn whether it is in fact a financial possibility. We are getting the results from their experience and I think they are very encouraging. They have come up with the pronouncement that so far as they have gone—and this goes for King Ranch as well as the Tropical cattle people—this will be an economic project at up to £15 or £30 an acre, and the expenditure will be repaid in the productivity of the land. They are taking into account that the land is in a good rainfall area, with good communications for getting the stock out. That highlights our reason for doing this sort of thing. In the long run I am sure that our experimental areas will bring out a lot of good technical experience and that much good country will then come into its own. Instead of being a bit of waste wallum land, it will be productive land in the best sense of the word.

The hon. member for Warrego, like a loyal friend, sprang to the support of one of his colleagues who was unwarrantedly criticised by the hon. member for Townsville South. I like the way he sprang to his comrade's rescue, not that he needed any rescue in my opinion. He does not like freeholding. He and I have never agreed on freehold, although I think we have agreed to respect each other's point of view. I remind him that it is a long time since an allotment could be bought for £3—that is, £3 a year for its rental value.

Mr. Dufficy: Unfortunately it is a long time since Labour was in office.

Mr. FLETCHER: Of course, this happened long before Labour went out of office.

The value of land bought at auction on the Gold Coast, about which we have had trouble ever since, has risen to £1,500 and £2,000 a block, and has gone as high as even £15,000 for a corner allotment. Although a Labour Government was in office at that time, we see how circumstances arise and they have created many of my problems relative to the South Coast. We have the fact that many people bought in at a very low price—initially the property did not cost them too much in rates or rent—but it has turned out to be a very expensive proposition, putting them in the position that they cannot stay there any longer. Indeed, with a better tenure operating perpetual lease is a bit of a drug on the market.

Mr. Dufficy: You will admit that that is precisely what I said. I am arguing that it was a good thing many years ago.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is right. We agree. The hon. member has a very good grip of the subject relative to this particular facet.

He expressed the opinion that we tried to do too much too quickly in the brigalow area. That may be so. I have never made any secret of the fact that this was somewhat of a risky operation. But what do we ever do in land settlement that is not a bit of a risk? We take the risk because we think the rewards, if we are successful, are adequate and worth while in view of the fact that we may pull it off. And we have a chance to do it.

Mr. O'Donnell: Do you think that in area 3 pre-development is the answer?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, I think so. I think in area 3 pre-development is a very good idea. I am pushing it forward as one of the main points to be considered. The little area where we carried out some pre-development was good. They were good blocks and the men who drew them are enjoying security.

The hon. member for Warrego suggested that Nive Downs was cut up into blocks which were too small. This could be argued back and forth. I hope I have not made as many mistakes in this matter as the hon. member implied. The claim that the blocks are too small comes hollowly from that side of the Committee because it is not usually Labour's point of view. The hon. member claimed that the blocks were made too small because for several years beforehand the district experienced really good seasons and it looked as if the areas would be adequate. This could be true. Experience will show, but it will take more experience than we have had. We want another 10 or 20 years. In the give-and-take of good and bad seasons we will find out where we are going.

Mr. Dufficy: Some of those who drew those blocks will not be there then.

Mr. FLETCHER: Some of them will be there, some may have gone the way of all flesh, and some could be selling out for £80,000 or £90,000. That is the asking price for them at the moment. I am not too down-hearted at what the hon. member said, although I am taking what he said to heart because he is a man who knows a great deal more than many others in this Chamber of the subject that he is talking about. He knows the West.

I agree with the hon. member on the subject of over-stocking, although I do not agree with the general principle he enunciated that these men were compelled to over-stock. Nobody compels anybody else who has an intelligent approach to his responsibilities to over-stock. Anybody who is over-stocking is doing it in the hope—perhaps the reasonable hope—of getting a more satisfactory income. But he is not compelled to do it. I remind the hon. member that many people in dire trouble because they over-stocked have far more land than the hon. member suggests is a fair living area. Because a man has a lot of land, it does not mean that he does not overstock. I can tell the Committee of men who have six living areas and are over-stocking, and have consistently over-stocked for years. They are my problem. It does not follow that if we give a man extra land he will not over-stock. People want as much as they can get. If a person has less land than he thinks will give him a good living, it is not to his advantage to over-stock because in the long run he will make less money than if he did the reasonable thing.

I am happy that the hon. member paid tribute to my officers. They deserve all the credit he paid them.

I have already adverted to one or two of what I characterised as regrettable points of view on the part of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. He said that we have got these chaps in the brigalow areas into a mess and now we have to prop them up. I remind him that they are not by any means the only people in Queensland who are in trouble. Queensland is in the grip of a desperately bad drought and there are many people in the West, the South-west, and every other part of the State that rely on sheep and cattle and native pasture, who are in some sort of trouble. Some of them are in such serious trouble that very likely they will not get out of it unscathed.

Area 3 is more difficult, but we will find a way of doing it. We may have to have bigger areas, different techniques, more blocks, or a change in our whole approach to it. Area 3 is brigalow country. It is undeveloped, and it is crying out for somebody to do something with it so that it will make its due contribution to the economy of Queensland. This State, and indeed Australia, depends to a large extent for its overseas balances on what comes from the soil. We are not getting enough out of the brigalow soil at the moment because it has no communications and no development.

Area 3 is in the category of land that we have to do something about. It is difficult, and its development will take a bit longer and may require more "blood, sweat, and tears," but we will do it.

The hon. member suggested that suckers cannot grow without moisture. They are parts of the plant that can grow without rain, because they grow from an established root system. Trees can be pulled down and the top part can be broken off, and suckers will still grow from the roots. They will continue to grow, and are in fact continuing to grow. That is regrettable, but true. In the Arcadia area, where there has been no effective rain since the brigalow was pulled, suckers are growing where no grass grows.

Mr. Wharton: The soil is loose and friable and it allows the roots to expand.

Mr. FLETCHER: Exactly. They are thriving, and it looks as though they will thrive for another 12 months even if it does not rain. That is the real root of the problem. If there had been plenty of rain there would not be as many suckers, because in the rich soil there would have been rapid growth of good vigorous-growing grasses like Rhodes grass which inhibit the growth of suckers. They do not grow as quickly or thickly when they are covered and shaded by a growth of grass. When there is young grass, stock can be kept out of it and a fire run over it when it is fairly damp so that the roots will not be killed. The suckers are singed off, and in a couple of years they are disposed of very effectively. That is not my theory but an established principle that has emerged from years of experience of dealing with brigalow.

Mr. Harrison: Because of this run of bad seasons, this is happening all over the good coastal land.

Mr. FLETCHER: Exactly, and not just in the brigalow country. The suckers have no competition from grass. This is unfortunate, but we will get good seasons and we are in no way down-hearted about what is happening.

I agree with the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha that ploughing suckers is the best method of treatment. Many people are doing that, and we are encouraging them in it. We hope that they will continue to do so, and that many more will realise the great advantage to be obtained from cultivation. As a matter of fact, throughout the area of the hon. member for Condamine and towards Goondiwindi the people who are doing best and are the most secure are those who combine a purely grazing economy with some cultivation. They have a combination of cash crops and feed for cattle, so that, having fed the green feed to cattle, they can be walked off. The harvest is obtained in that way.

Mr. Harrison: Unfortunately suckers grow in the broken ridgy country.

Mr. FLETCHER: That country cannot be ploughed.

I was interested to hear the hon. member for Condamine say that in his area knapsack sprays are being used. I assume that he means motorised sprays, which really are very effective. I have seen some of them used in the Goondiwindi area. Although it is hard work, it is very effective. One can be very selective and pick every brigalow sucker, give it its due application, and get a 100 per cent. kill.

Mr. O'Donnell: It is more effective when the brigalow has some height.

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes. It is most effective when the brigalow is quite young.

Valuation of land is a matter on which it is impossible to satisfy everyone. If one is selling, valuations are always too low; if buying, they are always too high. That is human nature. I do not claim that I would be any different from the ordinary landholder in this respect, and I am quite sure that hon. members opposite, if they were landholders, would be exactly the same type as I am and as my neighbours are, and as human nature dictates that we all are.

As long as there are valuations and people buy and sell land, there will be dissatisfaction. Perhaps some of it will be justified—I do not claim that the system is perfect—but I assure hon. members of this Assembly that the valuers of my department are given only one set of instructions—to make an honest valuation, one that they are honestly prepared to stand up to in the Land Court and justify; to know their business, to know why they are making the valuation, and honestly believe in it.

Mr. O'Donnell: Do you think that the value of land sold at auction influences the Valuer-General's Department?

Mr. FLETCHER: It might in the long run, if there was a succession of sales. In the main, the valuers are instructed not to have any regard to the values obtained at auction for brigalow land. The hon. member has only to remember the values that the department puts on the brigalow blocks generally, which is about half the value that the blocks have produced at auction, to get the answer to his question. Unless there are hundreds of cases in which high values are obtained at auction over the years, I do not think it will have much effect on valuations.

Mr. O'Donnell: The average valuations of the Valuer-General in the Arcadia area would be less than half the valuations fixed by your valuers?

Mr. FLETCHER: No, not in all cases.

Mr. O'Donnell: I said "the average".

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not think that would be so, even on the average. The latest valuations in the brigalow belt round Goondiwindi are very little different from those set by the Department of Lands. I

think that eventually, with a little bit of prodding and collaboration between the two departments, they will be still closer together.

Mr. Duggan: What do you mean by "prodding"? You said earlier, "All they are told is to give an honest value"; now you are talking about "prodding".

Mr. FLETCHER: One does not prod them in respect of the value that they bring in; one prods them by saying, "Have you had a yarn with the valuer that the Valuer-General sent to the job and found out whether your ideas and his run along parallel lines or whether there is a divergence of opinion that might be hard to explain or which, if explained, might bring about a modification in either one of the valuations?" That has nothing to do with the instruction that goes out from me. It is only a suggestion to this effect: "We had better get together with the other chaps. They are valuing the same places as we are but they might come up with a different basis. Let us find out why that is so."

Mr. Duggan: I thank you for your clarification of what you meant by "prodding".

Mr. FLETCHER: I hope that the hon. gentleman is satisfied with it.

The idea of one valuation has always appealed to me, perhaps for the very obvious reason that one cannot then argue about who is right and who is wrong. If there are two valuing authorities there is always a worry that one or the other must be wrong. To overcome that situation, one naturally thinks of one valuing authority as the answer, and I think it is. Perhaps there will eventually be only one.

Mr. O'Donnell: Has your department's valuation ever been under that of the Valuer-General's Department?

Mr. FLETCHER: No.

According to the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha, the Surveyor-General should be on the Land Administration Commission. If he were the right man for the job, that might be so; but I do not think he should go onto the Commission merely because he is the Surveyor-General. He has a very big and important job in the position that he now occupies. I am not saying that this may not be a good idea with certain personalities and in certain circumstances. However, I do not think it stands out as something that should be done, nor do I think it should be regarded as being completely silly and something that should not be done.

As to the brigalow land, I say again that my opinion of it has not varied very much. I have always stressed—perhaps I am repeating myself a little here—that one must take a long view of the matter. If anyone goes onto the land in Queensland, he has to take into account that a run of bad seasons when he is vulnerable may cause him to go broke. That has happened before. It

nearly happened to me and it could happen to many good men from now on. We hope that, with our system in the brigalow scheme, a man has a better chance than he would have without access to our scheme.

Let us consider the difference. If I draw a block on the brigalow scheme, admittedly I must have £12,000. I do not think that is too much; I sometimes think it is not enough. But, having got it, I am then entitled to £24,000 as a long-term loan, something that is very difficult to get from banks nowadays. The interest at the moment, I think, is 5½ per cent., which is pretty good developmental assistance. It is the kind of thing I wish I had had when I was younger and needed it very badly.

Anyone who is not in the brigalow scheme is using the same techniques in making a living, but he has to find the money himself, and, if he gets it, he is lucky to get it at anything like the terms on which we give our loans. I am sure he will not get it.

I do not think there is any way in which we can help the large population that is not on the brigalow scheme. After all, we have only about 100-odd people in that community. The other people are undergoing the same sort of privations without the assistance of our money, and if my heart is bleeding for the brigalow settlers it is also bleeding for the men who cannot be put into the category of the brigalow settlers. It is very difficult to foresee what may occur, but it has been suggested to me that the man on the land, being in business, should take out appropriate insurance in respect of fodder needs that will carry him through a drought. It is suggested that if that is a reasonable thing to do, those who cannot say they have done it are foolish. I should like to draw attention to the fact that on the land in Queensland every now and again there crops up a situation against which nobody can guard—almost nobody except a man like myself who has a lot of cultivation and could put up sheds and store a lot of hay.

Mr. Bennett: You have to expect drought from time to time, have you not?

Mr. FLETCHER: If the hon. member had been here he would not have had to remind me of that. I have already said that, and I thank him for his support, even though he does not know that he has supported me.

I am just making the point that every now and then one comes up against a situation that cannot be guarded against. It may be in the nature of a bush-fire or a flood—something that overtakes people and cannot be guarded against. I know there are people who could have done things and did not. I also know that a large section of the grazing community have done all they could reasonably do having regard to the circumstances, and having done that they are now reaching the end of their tether and we are reaching the situation where a fairly big rescue operation will have to be mounted.

The man in the brigalow areas is no worse off than others. I think he is better off. I am not sorry for the man in the brigalow and I think that anybody who knows anything about this will get behind these men, not by putting their spirits in a tail-spin by suggesting that they have no hope but by telling them the community is with them, that everybody realises the tough spot they are in but that they think they will get out of it. They are men who have always got out of this sort of situation and they finish on top. Men in Queensland who tackle a difficult situation, knowing the risk they take, usually come out on top, and men and women of this type who come out on top are the backbone of the country. There is no finer achievement than to start at the bottom and come out on top under our system of land ownership and husbandry.

The hon. member for Tablelands patted himself on the back because I did not blame the drought on the A.L.P. I have the feeling that he felt in his own heart that the A.L.P. was to blame for some of this and was apparently grateful for the fact that I overlooked it. It was an excellent speech except that it was not true. Among other things, he said that I had blamed the drought for various things, and that they could not possibly all have been due to the drought. He went on to suggest that certain things which I know and can demonstrate to have been caused by the drought were perhaps attributable to our land policy. He said that I had mentioned that the lantana insects were not doing well because of the drought. He did not think that was a fair go. Presumably I was somewhat to blame in that I did not give the insects a fair go.

Mr. Wallis-Smith: You read that into it.

Mr. FLETCHER: I did, indeed. I point out that the lantana insects need something to eat. When they emerge from the pupa stage under very hot and dry conditions it is very difficult for them to live. They need a warm, moist climate. The present drought conditions greatly inhibit their chances of success. This is even more true of the insects I mentioned to control noogoora burr. Having been put on the noogoora burr, they might multiply and then go down into the soil to hibernate or pupate, whatever the term is. When they finally emerge from this stage, what happens? They find that there is not a noogoora burr between here and Birdsville, so they just die, and a whole generation of the insects is lost.

Mr. Duggan: Seeing that you are giving us a dissertation on insects, could you name the insect that is eating out the vitals of the coalition?

Mr. FLETCHER: There is no insect eating out the vitals of the coalition. As far as I know, there is nothing in the vitals that a good dose of common sense could not cure.

I was rather impressed by, and very much on side with, the hon. member's desire to preserve the flora and fauna of this country. That is something that is very dear to my heart. However, I should like to disabuse his mind about what hormones from the air are likely to do. He mentioned a book "The Silent World". We do use insecticides, and I agree that the use of insecticides is something that should be approached very cautiously; but there are not the same dangers associated with the use of hormones. Although we use them for the destruction of brigalow there is nothing else but brigalow to destroy in that area.

Mr. Wallis-Smith: Could it not have an effect on the pastures?

Mr. FLETCHER: It will not affect grasses. It will kill certain weed crops but there is nothing like that in the brigalow area to kill. There is only the brigalow sucker.

Mr. Wallis-Smith: It is released into the atmosphere.

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not think there is anything in the way of radiation to worry about from this hormone application. It will kill the brigalow sucker, but it stops at that. It is a good thing for the hon. member to worry about the destruction of our native fauna and flora.

Mr. Sherrington: You are letting them cut down too many trees.

Mr. FLETCHER: I think that is true. It is not a matter of letting them cut them down any more than it is a matter of letting them burn them. I have deplored the fact that fierce fires have resulted in the brigalow country because of insufficient fire-breaks or wind-breaks for the preservation of large representative areas of this type of country.

At the moment I have been instrumental in having 60,000 acres—including quite a bit of brigalow, although not as much as I hoped; I thought there was a lot more than there is—set aside for preservation as a national park, or some other sort of area in which burning will never be allowed. Again this is something that is difficult to guard against as people will light fires.

I am very much with the hon. member relative to his worries about fires in the North. I mentioned this earlier point in my speech. This is a matter that should be watched very carefully, especially around Cairns, because in steep country the fire will go up a slope in this type of weather and do far more damage in an hour or so than we can hope to repair in a century. It is not always unintentional; it is a nice little racket to light a fire and then sow grass in the very rich land that can then be used. Those responsible for it get a very fine cover of grass and excellent pasture from it for a few years, and if they are wily

they set a fire in the resultant grass and it will go up the slope and burn some more. However, in the end result there is a shocking mess with stones and erosion, which will fill established creeks, gullies and drainage lines to the detriment of the whole area. This is something we should guard against. I am very much on-side with the hon. member on that subject.

With respect to the blocks of land he thinks we should have opened, we opened all that have been surveyed and we will be surveying some more; there will not be a great deal of delay.

I adverted previously to the delay in freeholding. It has been brought about by the lack of men who are suddenly required to cope with this spate of demand from freeholders generally. I remind hon. members that freeholding valuation is made as at the date of application. It does not mean that if it is delayed for a year the price goes up and the person concerned is unfortunate.

Mr. Wallis-Smith: The people do not know that, and they are worried.

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member will now be able to tell them.

Mr. Wallis-Smith: I have told them.

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member for Condamine knows his brigalow country. It gave me a good deal of satisfaction to hear him. Like the hon. member for Carnarvon, he may be depended upon entirely to understand the nature of the brigalow scheme. He is very much in favour—as I am—of using the plough in the brigalow. The results in green-fodder crops are tremendous and have to be seen to be believed. Brigalow soil is really very fertile soil and, in the main, does get a reasonable rainfall. In a year such as this it looks pretty bad, but in a good year it is really impressive. There is nothing much better, and I have not seen better cattle than those that came out of the brigalow country. That is a reflection of the character of the feed, and the feed is a reflection of the character of the soil.

Freeholding valuations, which are his trouble, are also my trouble. I have already referred to them. I can only tell him that my valuers are told to bring in an honest value. If a value is wrong—and, indeed any man can be wrong—I am sorry, but the valuers are doing their best. I would never ever tell any of them that they have to bring in as high a value as they can get. All I say to them is—and I have said this to them personally or collectively—"All I want you to do is not to bring in a value that the Minister will want or to be influenced by what the grazier wants, but get at it honestly so that you can say in court, 'This is the value I arrived at, and this is the way I arrived at it.'"

Mr. Graham: Do you think it possible to please any graziers in the matter of valuation? Have you ever heard a grazier who is satisfied with land values?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, I have; I think I have heard of them. If the hon. member was a grazier—and it would vastly improve him if he were—

Mr. Graham: I agree with you.

Mr. FLETCHER: He would immediately take on the mantle of a grazier, and I can imagine the howl he would put up if his valuation was even a "couple of bob" higher than he thought it ought to be.

I think I have dealt with most of the comments or criticisms that have been offered. Very happily, they were not serious criticisms. I have been very impressed by the friendliness of the approach to this very important matter of land administration, and I thank hon. members for their contributions.

Mr. BYRNE (Mourilyan) (7.55 p.m.): Perhaps the most important portfolio in the Ministry today is that of Lands because it has such wide ramifications. It covers matters that are vitally important to the economy of Queensland. One must recognise that no other department is as important as this one. Listening to the Minister today, one would be inclined to think that he is very satisfied with the economy of the State and the contribution of his department. Perhaps he is entitled to express that opinion, but, if he has read recent correspondence and articles dealing with the economy of the States, he will realise that Queensland's economy is the worst in Australia. Queensland has to accept its responsibility and the Department of Lands has to accept its responsibility to the economy of Queensland. Everybody we speak to and those authorities we have access to tell us that, unless Queensland's economy is propped up from time to time, in due course there will be a recession. I am inclined to think the Federal Government realised that and is doing what it can to help Queensland. All this talk of the work of the Minister and his department being so advantageous to the general body of people in Queensland does not carry very much weight with me. I concede that the officers are good, but they are not the policy makers and cannot be blamed for the shortcomings of the Minister and Cabinet.

This afternoon the Minister complained of Opposition criticism of the brisgalow scheme and other schemes, and the bad publicity given to them. He deprecated it and was perhaps justified in doing so. But he is not to be excused, because not long ago he belittled the King Ranch land in my area in order to justify a very valuable gift to that company. He should not complain about the other fellow if he does the same thing. I

know it is a difficult portfolio and I admit that he is perhaps the best Minister of a very mediocre lot.

Throughout Queensland there are different land tenures. We have heard many discussions about the merits of leasehold and freehold, and we could argue from morning till night which is the better and not get very far. It will always be very difficult to get the best use of all our lands. What is the best use? Production in the first place, I should say, and then settlement.

I heard the Minister say this afternoon that he would very much like an additional amount of money so that he could provide more settlement under a particular scheme he then had in mind. Settlement is the most necessary and most vital factor in the complete development of Queensland. Without settlement, we could have all manner of proposals but would not get very far.

I object to the Government's action in virtually giving away the Crown estate, on a very poor pretext and for a very small consideration. Land speculators will always be with us. They will always be there to urge the Minister or whoever is in charge of the Department of Lands to act in their interest. I now want to refer to King Ranch, which I say is one of the greatest blemishes on the record of the Department of Lands. I have said it before, and I say it again. The Minister told us it was useless land. He said that nobody was interested in it, that it was swampy, and that King Ranch Development Coy. Pty. Ltd. would have to spend millions on it in order to make it productive.

Mr. Row: They have spent it, too.

Mr. BYRNE: How many millions?

Mr. Row: I would not know, but a lot of money. I know it; I have seen it.

Mr. BYRNE: I say definitely that it has not spent millions, but, if the Minister can prove that it has, I will be very pleased indeed to acknowledge that he is right and I am wrong.

Mr. Fletcher: Your own A.L.P. council at Cardwell supports it.

Mr. BYRNE: The Minister said that the company has spent millions of pounds, and I say that it has not. If he can prove that it has spent millions on the property, I shall buy champagne for everyone in the Chamber. It was said that it would spend £1,000,000 for a start, and then it gradually crept up to £2,000,000 and then £3,000,000. Fancy that! Probably the millions that have been referred to by the Minister are on the Kathleen Mavourneen system—"It may be for years, and it may be for ever." It would be very interesting to find out exactly how much has been spent, and my offer to the Minister for Primary Industries still stands.

Whilst on this subject, he may also be able to tell us what huge number of men are being employed on this great area of land in North Queensland. Are there 50, 100, 200, or just a few? That is an interesting item. If on this vast area of land there is no settlement apart from that carried out by the lessee himself, and no men, or very few, are employed, what was the good of giving it away?

Mr. Murray: Do you suggest that this land has been given away?

Mr. BYRNE: Almost given away.

Mr. Murray: They cannot take it away; it will always be there.

Mr. BYRNE: I ask the hon. member to listen to me for a moment. I said that the land was virtually given away. The company has been granted a lease at 1s. an acre, or some merely nominal amount, and has the right to freehold 34,000 acres at £1 an acre and 17,000 acres at £5 an acre. I defy hon. members opposite to contradict that. Perhaps the hon. member for Clayfield can show that what I have said is wrong. As the amount of money spent on the land is nothing like what was envisaged and so few people are employed, I make bold to say that in those circumstances the land has virtually been given away. The Minister shed tears over what was going to happen to King Ranch Development Coy. Pty. Ltd. He said that it would lose money. He said that no-one would touch this land with a 40-ft. pole.

Mr. Fletcher: I never said that they would lose their money.

Mr. BYRNE: Yes, the Minister did. He said that he was very sorry for them. My word he did! He said that others had looked at the land and turned it down. The hon. member for Clayfield told me that he had a company that was interested in it provided it received the same terms and conditions that were so conveniently given to King Ranch Development Coy. Pty. Ltd. The Minister tells us in one breath that we should not criticise the proposal and in another breath himself criticised the land. Perhaps it was purely coincidental that somebody came along and got it for nothing.

Adjoining lands, as the hon. member for Clayfield knows, are being sold at from £50 to £100 an acre. I suggest that I or anyone else would be very happy to go to what is perhaps the richest land in Australia and obtain 1,000 acres at £1 an acre. Would not 50 families be better on that class of land than one big company? Of course they would!

Hon. members were told that there was no chance of immediate production and no chance of achieving anything from that land. Listen to this! It never was useless land. It was stocked almost immediately from stations elsewhere, and I have been informed that cattle from the property were sold recently in Townsville at a very high price.

How could cattle be brought to that property and sold a short time afterwards at a very high price if the land is rotten and useless?

The point is that the Government gave to the company for virtually nothing some of the most fertile land in the State, and I think its action was very wrong. Recently land almost adjoining this land was put up for sale. If those blocks of land were useless, one would expect that no-one would apply for them. How many people applied? Over 100 applied for the blocks that were balloted for and the people who got them may be very pleased.

Mr. Sullivan: You have made this same speech before. People who live in this area and who know the land have said that you are wrong. I do not know the area, but that is what people have told me.

Mr. BYRNE: When I said that it was virtually given away, it might be thought that the company had to fall the scrub and put the land under cultivation. But what happened? A fairy godmother came along and began shifting the scrub. Who was that fairy godmother? The Government of Queensland. How crazy can the position get?

Mr. Row: You have been there.

Mr. BYRNE: Of course I have. Have a look at every sawmill round the countryside. Where is all the timber coming from? It is coming from King Ranch, and it is stacked as high as possible. Will the Minister deny that the Government is removing the timber from King Ranch? That is a straight question: are they, or are they not?

Mr. Row: There is not much timber there.

Mr. Fletcher: They are removing the millable timber.

Mr. BYRNE: The Minister for Primary Industries said they were not.

Mr. Fletcher: He misunderstood you. They are not removing the scrub.

Mr. Sullivan: Do you want them to doze it into a heap and burn it?

Mr. Sherrington: Provided you are on top, yes.

Mr. BYRNE: As I said, the company obtained the land for virtually nothing; now the Government is removing the timber for it.

My complaint is not against King Ranch Development Coy. Pty. Ltd. The company has been very fortunate; I compliment it on its good fortune. They are making the best use of the land. I do not complain about that, but I object to the Government's being so good to them and, at the same time, being so hard with our own people by not providing settlement when there is an opportunity to do so. Other people are crying out for land to be thrown open for cattle-fattening purposes and also for canegrowing.

Recently land was opened up in my area of Mourilyan but, did the Government give those who were successful in getting assignments the right to acquire it for £1 or £5 an acre? No, the Government wanted £50 an acre for that land, and got it.

Mr. Row: That is cane land.

Mr. BYRNE: What is the difference? The Government was selling it to successful applicants so, in effect, what it was selling was purely and simply a cane assignment. The land was not worth £50 an acre. If a man had obtained a 60/45 or an 80/60 assignment, just how much money would he have needed in additional capital over a period of years? I should say a considerable amount and obviously that must add to the eventual cost of production.

I say that anybody who would do in such circumstances what this Government did, after having given land to King Ranch for £1 an acre, is an exploiter, and the Government is to be condemned for it. I certainly and sincerely condemn it.

Mr. Davies: It is Government exploitation.

Mr. BYRNE: Of course. What right has the Government to charge £50 an acre when the industry is so very poor? One has to remember that in the northern parts of Queensland there is always an assured rainfall. It is because of that that we hardly ever hear of a drought. If we have three weeks of dry weather some people jokingly say it is a drought, and that is very nearly right. But on the northern coast we want settlement and I say definitely that the Department of Lands and the Government are not doing anything to provide settlement. Apart from the sugar industry and the timber industry we want other industries in that area, if possible. How happy we would be if we had in the western areas, the land in the Tully Valley with its assured rainfall! The men on that land would not then need assistance from the Government.

But irrespective of the value of land we want settlement. We want our young people on the land, building their own homes, bringing up their families and erecting schools. That is the type of settlement we want, not the type that comes from giving away huge areas of land to one particular company to exploit for its own benefit. There is nothing wrong with that, of course, but, in comparison with what we want, the giving away of huge areas of land for virtually nothing is altogether wrong.

Even if we have to give our young people at no cost to them land on which to settle, erect their own homes and carry on their usual pursuits, it would still be in the interests of the State. The Government and the Department of Lands have to accept responsibility for the economy of Queensland, which, unfortunately, is so depressed that it is regarded as the worst in Australia.

Mr. R. JONES (Cairns) (8.10 p.m.): I was very pleased to note during the Minister's discourse that he was concerned about the fire hazard in Crown lands, particularly on the ranges in the Cairns area. This very evening the citizens of Cairns are holding a public meeting to discuss the prevention of fires. Whatever might arise from those deliberations, I trust that the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Local Government and Conservation will take cognisance of the recommendations submitted.

It has become painfully clear to me over the years that in the straight clash the forces of conservation seem to lose out against the forces of economic growth. It always appears that in the judging of success the people who advocate conservation fall far behind.

The people of Cairns are concerned about the administration of the proposed reclaimed area along the city's foreshores. We are all fearful that the reclamation work will be a burden on Cairns ratepayers. To my knowledge, this is a facet of land administration that has not been embarked upon in any other centre in the State. We do not know whether the reclaimed land will be put under the control of the Department of Harbours and Marine, the Cairns City Council, the Land Administration Commission, or the Cairns Harbour Board. When the area of 4½ acres was reclaimed on the eastern foreshore I understand that the Land Administration Commission, the Cairns Harbour Board and the Cairns City Council shared equally the cost of £21,000. At the present time there is a difference of opinion as to who will administer the land when it is reclaimed above the high-water spring-tide mark. The Cairns City Council was granted a loan of £150,000, for which incidentally it made no application but which will be a charge on the ratepayers, to build the retaining wall. Whether the dredging will be financed by Loan Funds, a Commonwealth marine aid grant or the Department of Harbours and Marine seems to be in doubt.

The problem that confronts the Cairns City Council and the Cairns Harbour Board is whose responsibility it will be to administer the land reclaimed behind the retaining wall. If Cairns ratepayers have to pay for this retaining wall, the land behind the wall should belong to the Cairns City Council and be administered by it. To recoup the money spent on reclaiming the land, obviously the land will have to be sold. That would mean that the centre of the city would be moved away from its present location, the land contiguous to the reclaimed area would be devalued, and rates generally would be increased.

We believe that the wrong concept has been adopted in financing the reclamation of this area. I do not think that such a scheme, which burdens the ratepayers, has

ever previously been advanced in Queensland and for that reason I bring it to the attention of hon. members. I repeat that it is a wrong concept for financing this reclamation scheme.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order! I have given the hon. member a lot of latitude. He is now discussing a Treasury Department matter. I should like him to come back to the Department of Lands.

Mr. R. JONES: In deference to your ruling, Mr. Hodges, I feel that the Land Administration Commission has previously administered the reclamation of areas. I am trying to point out that in this instance there is a departure from normal procedure and practice. I am advocating that the Land Administration Commission should administer this area, not the Cairns City Council. I believe that is a reasonable submission to make. I think it is fitting that I should raise this matter during these Estimates because no-one seems to know what is to happen. I feel that now is the right time to make my submissions, and that they are necessary on behalf of the citizens of Cairns. I trust that the Minister will take cognisance of what has been said at this juncture.

There is the fact, too, that another area of reclamation has been administered one-third by the Cairns Harbour Board, one-third by the Cairns City Council and the other third, perhaps, by the Land Administration Commission. Recently a motel site was leased to the firm of All Trans Pty. Ltd. This concerns public lands. While the Treasurer may say that the Cairns Harbour Board had the right to do so we feel that the Land Administration Commission would not have made such a decision. We, as people of the North, understand that we must encourage industry, as the Treasurer has said, but surely a motel site is not exactly the type of enterprise for which public land should be leased.

I vehemently urge that the Treasurer intervene on behalf of the citizens of Cairns and ensure that lands which may have been reclaimed at a cost to the ratepayers of Cairns are not handed over en masse to people who want to build motels. It is only fair and reasonable that anyone who wants to build a motel should have to go on the real estate market as does everyone else and put forward his terms to the real estate market, and not be granted a lease of public lands. This is an alienation of public lands for private purpose and private income. It is a wrong concept.

Another matter to which I wish to refer concerns island leases, particularly those in our vicinity on Green Island and Fitzroy

Island. In an article in "The Cairns Post" of 23 January, 1965, the Minister had the following statement attributed to him:—

"Survey of Islands for Tourist Potential

"A State Government committee will shortly begin a survey of Queensland islands to determine how many new ones may be developed as tourist resorts.

"The Minister for Lands (Mr. A. R. Fletcher) announced today that the committee would comprise representatives from the Lands, Forestry and Harbours and Marine Departments and the Tourist Bureau.

"It was expected the committee would be in a position to make a report by the middle of this year.

"He said the tourist industry was assuming rapidly increasing importance in the State's economy.

"The committee would determine how many more islands could be used without adversely affecting existing tourist facilities."

Mr. Tucker: Who said that?

Mr. R. JONES: The Minister for Lands, on 23 January, 1965.

In reply to a question asked recently, the Minister reviewed the islands on the Queensland coast and told us that this report may be ready next year. That is contradictory of what was stated in the Press just before the Cairns by-election in February. We in Cairns are concerned about the tourist potential of North Queensland and of the islands lying off our coast, and their development. Green Island and Fitzroy Island have the potential and should be further developed.

Submissions were made by the former member for Cairns, the late G. W. G. Wallace, and the hon. member for Cook relative to camping sites for tourists on Green Island. We were assured that camping on Green Island would not be interfered with. Since the lease was granted, camping on Green Island has been disallowed. It is not fair that the ordinary citizen in the area is not to be allowed to camp on this island, even in the off season. The cost of using the present facilities, namely £2 12s. a day, precludes any family man or anybody else on a wage or salary from staying there. Tourist leases are within the scope of the Minister. These public lands should be set aside as national parks. I feel we should erect on these camping sites for rental at a cheap rate, standard huts with standard facilities to encourage hygiene, but retaining the rough-and-ready camping requirements that people look for. I think there is tourist potential in this.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order! I should like the hon. member to come back to the Estimates of the Department of Lands, which have nothing to do with tourism.

Mr. R. JONES: I understand that tourist leases are within the scope of the Minister for Lands.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is dealing with national parks, which are within the ambit of the Minister for Conservation.

Mr. R. JONES: I ask the Minister for Lands to refer this matter to the Minister for Conservation. The land has to be set aside, and it has to be set aside, I should imagine, by the Minister for Lands. If the lease cannot be granted on Green Island, it should be granted on Fitzroy Island. A great deal of surveying would not be required to discover the potential. If the officers of the Cairns Tourist Bureau are interviewed, they could give the necessary information.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (8.29 p.m.): I rise to speak on these Estimates mainly because of the concluding remarks in the extraordinary speech of the hon. member for Mourilyan. He has one of the most exciting pieces of development taking place in his electorate, yet he stands up in this Chamber and criticises it. It almost seems as if he does not want it. I am not sure whether he knows what he wants.

Mr. Byrne: Nor did you want it at one time.

Mr. MURRAY: I have differed with the Minister; let there be no doubt about it. But no-one has ever questioned the need for this development on this scale. Let us go back a few years. The Minister will recall, I am sure, that, after he first looked at the land and obtained an appreciation of what should be done in that country, he altered the administrative arrangements of his department for the opening of certain small blocks in the area because it was perfectly clear to him—as it was to anybody, and certainly should have been to the hon. member for Mourilyan—that opening the country in the manner advocated or being followed at that time was not satisfactory. I am sure the Minister would be the first to agree that that is what took place when we looked at the country and saw what was happening.

Out of a lot of schemes, a lot of ideas, and a measure of disagreement here and there the present arrangement was made under which King Ranch Development Coy. Pty. Ltd. was granted 50,000 acres in the Tully area. Certainly others wanted it, and it is good that they did. However, a company with a great deal of money and much experience in land development throughout the world was granted this area. The results, of course, speak clearly for themselves.

Mr. Bromley interjected.

Mr. MURRAY: Has the hon. member for Norman had a look at this project? If he has not, I suggest that he do so, because the results speak for themselves. With the required money, vigour, and enterprise, the

company has been able to tackle the problems experienced in that difficult forest country and is now producing clear results for all to see.

Mr. Dufficy: Are you happy about their getting it?

Mr. MURRAY: I had considerable argument with the Minister over this matter. I am not going to turn this Assembly into a mutual admiration club. Of course there were disagreements; there always will be, but do not let us ignore the fact that this development is proving tremendously successful. In spite of that, the hon. member for Mourilyan stands up and criticises it.

Mr. Byrne: I said it was successful. What are you talking about?

Mr. Dufficy: How can you defend giving it to them at £5 an acre?

Mr. MURRAY: That is quite interesting. This land has little value till it is put into production. Many people were sitting on country in that area waiting for capital gains, and very little indeed was happening. The hon. member for Mourilyan must know that.

Mr. Byrne: The Labour Party would not allow it to go on the market. They wanted it for sugar and timber.

Mr. MURRAY: So little was happening on the freehold country.

Mr. Byrne: It was not freehold country.

Mr. MURRAY: There was some freehold country which was not being developed in that area.

Mr. Dufficy: It was a special lease when it was granted.

Mr. MURRAY: That is so, and the Minister granted it for purposes which carry freeholding rights. Here was a company prepared to go in and integrate its operations in that area with its other sensible and logical interests, in the business of development in Queensland, for the great benefit of Queensland. In spite of that, criticism of the project was heard from the other side of the Chamber. It ill-behoves the hon. member for Mourilyan to carry on in this way. He may have disagreed, as I disagreed, with the way in which it was done, but do not let us—

Mr. Byrne: You told me that you represented Hookers and you could not get it.

Mr. MURRAY: The fact of the matter is that this wonderful development is taking place. We can be very pleased indeed that it is. Does the hon. member for Mourilyan stand in this Chamber and criticise the development of the wallum country? I do not hear any criticism from him about that. This is a matter that concerns him personally, because it is one of the projects that will have a tremendously beneficial effect on the development of his area and other wet-coast areas.

Did I hear the hon. member say a few moments ago that I wanted it for myself?

Mr. Byrne: You told me so yourself.

Mr. MURRAY: At no time did I ever say that. Had I known 15 or so years ago as much as I know now, I would have endeavoured to take up country in the Tully area for this form of development, because of its much greater potential, instead of the more marginal land—the Minister for Primary Industries will realise this fully—in the Herbert River area, although it, too, is magnificent in production. I do not think that the production from this sort of wet-coast development will be exceeded anywhere.

Mr. Byrne: You would like if for £1 an acre.

Mr. MURRAY: The fact is that this development is taking place. Is the hon. member for Mourilyan arguing about the wallum country? Yet the wallum country will produce in the same way as the wet-coast area will produce. As you know, Mr. Hodges, areas of the wallum country will be highly productive, as the type of research that is continually being undertaken through the Department of Primary Industries and the C.S.I.R.O. is clearly showing.

I am very happy that the Minister has appreciated that it takes this form of capital and enterprise to carry out the initial development. As much as one might wish to encourage the little man, one would not want to see him struggling on and on against the odds that are against him in this type of development.

Mr. Armstrong: It would not be possible for him to exist.

Mr. MURRAY: No. That is borne out by the number of people who have faced financial hardship and got only a mediocre existence in this country over the years, not only because they could not finance its development but, more importantly, because they did not have available to them the benefit of scientific research and the necessary techniques. One thing generates another in this form of development. Once capital with the enterprise to take a risk comes to the country, this assists to generate research and development generally is accelerated. It gives me very much pleasure to say that this King Ranch development is a wonderful thing indeed for the wet coast.

I mentioned the wallum country area earlier. I am very pleased that the Minister has opened up more of it to this form of development, because it will set a pattern. As research continues, more and more people will be keen to come in with adequate money, when they can look over someone else's fence, see the stock, see the results, and know they can go to research or extension workers and get the help they need to go ahead

with it. I am sure we will see vast areas of the coast developed far more rapidly than they would have been developed by the small-man—the piecemeal type of approach that has been in existence for so long and which has produced so little—now that the great possibilities of the high-rainfall coast have been shown. I have always said that this form of development—and the Minister, I know, appreciates it fully—can make a tremendous and significant difference to our cattle industry. The coastal belt when developed as a highly improved grazing area, with intensive pasture improvement, will have a great stabilising effect on the beef-cattle industry.

Whilst I am on my feet I want to say a word or two about the brigalow scheme. I make the very important point that those who have been successful at ballot and who are now on brigalow blocks cannot be allowed to fail. The Government and all hon. members must adopt the attitude that we are, to a great extent, in partnership with the holders of these blocks. We have set up the scheme. Whether we agree with it or not, we have attracted these people—and many of them are young men with their lives ahead of them—to the ballots. We have granted them these blocks. We, in our wisdom, have set out the conditions, whether they be satisfactory or otherwise, and we are faced with a clear responsibility to ensure the success of the people who have been successful at ballot.

The lessons we learn as we go along—and I am sure no-one expected that we would not learn lessons from this type of scheme—must be applied in future, to make further development of the brigalow belt more rational and sensible. I think we have to be very flexible indeed in our ideas. I am sure all hon. members would agree that a flexible policy should be followed by the Minister so that the lessons we learn as we proceed can be applied in the future. That, I think, is the key to the scheme.

Lessees who have obtained their blocks at ballot have certain freeholding rights. They have invested their capital and must not be allowed to fail. Further, if experience shows it to be necessary, we should not insist on terms or conditions too harsh for those who have purchased their blocks on the 25 per cent. minimum auction.

Mr. Byrne: Alf Muller does not think much of it.

Mr. MURRAY: I think flexibility for all these people, whether they be purchasers or selectors by ballot, should be the catch-word. I think that is tremendously important and I believe the Committee will agree with me.

The selection system which the Minister mentioned for the Gulf, the Peninsula and other remote areas, is extremely wise. As I recall it, this sort of scheme has been highly successful on the western lands of

New South Wales for many years. It has not been easy for any person to be finally approved for ballot. Surely we have a responsibility to see, whatever scheme of this nature we may be putting into operation for our Crown lands, that we get the most suitable type after a very exhaustive selection. If we do not, we saddle ourselves with all sorts of problems and, of course, we have unhappy and unsatisfactory men on the land. This in itself is a challenge.

Another point I should like to mention—the Minister touched on this—is the administration of resumptions of portions of leases falling due at this stage during a period of drought. The Minister has said that he has discussed this matter with his department. He mentioned it again today.

Mr. Sherrington: That is all he is doing—talking.

Mr. MURRAY: I do not believe that to be so. I believe that the Minister understands the position. Men on the land who are having portions of their leases resumed, and whose flocks or herds have been decimated by drought through no fault of their own, by an extension of time are allowed a reasonable opportunity to build up their flocks and herds to recoup some of their severe capital losses. I understand that there is precedent for this, and I think that the grant of a reasonable extension of time is the least we can do for them. I am sure the department will be most sympathetic to any who are placed in this position.

Another matter worthy of mention is timber on Crown leases. I think the Minister should allow any lessee to use all the timber he requires for normal maintenance and developmental purposes on his block without having to go through the worrying procedure of getting permission to do so.

Mr. Tucker: What is wrong with getting permission?

Mr. MURRAY: They are permission and control happy on that side of the Chamber.

What I am suggesting is something that we have not got around to yet. The whole approach of this Government is so different from what we have seen from hon. members opposite. This is a matter that the Minister should get around to in the fullness of time, and thus relieve lessees of the niggardly business of having to get permission to use timber on their blocks for their normal requirements.

Mr. Sullivan interjected.

Mr. MURRAY: The hon. member for Condamine points out that the average fellow, while seeking the permission which would always be demanded from hon. members opposite, could have had his posts up and his gates swung. He would have them up before breakfast. The people from whom

he would be seeking permission perhaps would not have had time to open their eyes. This is a small concession which I believe would please a great section of the community in the pastoral areas. I can never believe, as hon. members opposite do, that timber is wantonly destroyed just for the sake of its destruction.

Mr. R. Jones interjected.

Mr. MURRAY: The hon. member is suggesting that the average man on the land does not know pine from coolibah. If the hon. member for Cairns were on the land he would need a great deal of guidance and help. Of course, he would need only to go to the hon. member for Condamine, although that hon. member would probably find it difficult to instil knowledge into the hon. member for Cairns.

Appropriately, the Minister spent a great deal of time during his opening remarks in dealing with the effects of the drought. We will not know the full results of its disastrous effects on this State for many years as it is impossible to properly assess at this time what the loss to the State will be from our drought-stricken land. When we get past the stage at which the man on the land himself has used his own insurance—which the prudent man on the land will provide if he can do so practically and economically—and breeding herds and stock are being disposed of, or are in danger of being disposed of, we must face up to the realities of a national calamity. It is at that stage that the Government, the Minister for Lands and his department, and the Minister for Primary Industries—all in conjunction—should step in and take very positive steps.

It is curious to me that we should be prepared to spend, Commonwealth-wise, with State agreement and industry agreement, possibly £50,000,000 or more to help implement a proposed reserve price wool scheme and yet we quibble about a few million pounds to preserve the stock which will supply the product to which we want to attach the reserve price scheme. First thinks should come first. I again sincerely hope that very positive steps are taken in this matter and that we shall soon see some results. When our lands are decimated, as they are in many parts of Queensland, to the stage of a national disaster, we must step in in the national interest because none of us can afford to see such a disaster occur.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (8.53 p.m.): I thought some moments ago that I would not have to make reference to the area of land which was granted to King Ranch, but seeing that the hon. member for Clayfield has entered this debate and has decried the very fine contribution of the hon. member for Mourilyan, I feel that in reply to him, and in defence of the hon. member for Mourilyan—

Mr. Sullivan: You are going to step in where angels fear to tread.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: For the first time, I have seen an angel with gout.

In defence of the hon. member for Mourilyan, I must say that when we study the facts associated with this land it is hard to have any sympathy for the crocodile tears of the hon. member for Clayfield. It is very strange that the Government should make this parcel of land available to a foreign company at a price of £1 to £5 an acre, yet, on the other hand, when increased cane assignments were granted there was no Crown land available for Queenslanders. No Crown land was made available in this area for increased cane assignments; the cane farmers and those who were able to obtain cane assignments were forced to pay £40 an acre for land on which to grow cane.

The tragedy is that today the cane-farmers are over-capitalised because they paid £80 an acre for land on which to grow cane and the sugar market did not reach expectations. Some of them are on the verge of bankruptcy. Yet the hon. member for Clayfield sheds crocodile tears over the criticism of the King Ranch deal under which valuable rain forests were destroyed merely to pander to the interests of overseas investment in this State. To the best of my understanding this land was eminently suitable for cane-growing, and I say forcibly that it should have been made available to Queensland farmers for that purpose. As the hon. member for Townsville North has just prompted me, had it not been made available in this area, an equivalent area of Crown land should have been made available elsewhere.

Mr. Sullivan: Don't you believe in the development of Queensland?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: Don't you come into it again or I will be forced to—

Mr. Sullivan: I am trying to help you along a bit.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The day you can help me—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order! I remind the hon. member for Salisbury that he is addressing the Chair.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I regret any discourtesy to the Chair, Mr. Hodges.

Like the hon. member for Tablelands, I am concerned with the possible effect that aerial spraying and other means of pest control may have on the fauna of our State. The Minister assured the Committee earlier that the hormone sprays being used constitute no real danger to our fauna. But it must be remembered that we have previously set aerial baits for dingoes and there is no statistical information on whether

any of those baits were consumed by various other fauna. These things have a distinct bearing on the future of the fauna and flora of our State.

We should go further and express alarm at the wholesale clearing of huge tracts of land. Possibly this is going on under the brigalow development scheme. One can see an example of this tragedy by travelling along the Cunningham Highway and looking over the plains, where there is not a tree for miles. This position obtains as one goes farther west. We have made no real effort to overcome soil erosion by providing buffer zones of trees. If this is happening under the brigalow development scheme, with a continuing drought thousands of tons of soil will be blown into the sea by the prevailing winds. Only recently in the Brisbane metropolitan area we have seen with our own eyes evidence of the amount of soil that is being blown from the West and taken out to the Pacific Ocean.

How can this be prevented? Certainly the problem will be aggravated if huge tracts of land are cleared and there are no wind-breaks for miles. Only recently I had the opportunity of viewing a series of pictures of the English country-side taken from a helicopter. One of the things that impressed me was the almost fanatical desire throughout England to preserve buffer zones of trees between areas of cleared land. Throughout the agricultural areas of Britain there is distinct evidence of a desire to retain buffer zones, although if there is one country in the world that cannot afford to waste an inch of land, it is England. The British are very careful to retain strips of trees in agricultural areas.

In Australia it is fashionable for bulldozers to move in and tear down all living vegetation. It seems reasonable to assume that trees cannot be destroyed without their loss having some significant effect on rainfall. I notice in the annual report of the Land Administration Commission that reference is made to the setting aside of various parcels of land for public purposes. A large area of 64,000 acres is being set aside as a reserve for native flora and fauna. I hope I am correct in assuming that at least that area will include brigalow land.

Whilst it is desirable to preserve the most picturesque of our scenery as national parks and reserves, I feel that it is vital to preserve for posterity every facet of Queensland. Even portion of the most drab forest country should be preserved because it is indeed Australiana. I want to link this with my remarks concerning the need to preserve buffer zones, because I feel that in all future land development reserves could well be included as part of a policy to assist in the prevention of soil erosion.

I also think it very important to preserve sufficient of the country-side to provide adequately for our fauna. Every day there is evidence that many animals that only a

few short years ago were quite common are dwindling in numbers till they are indeed in danger of extinction. This seems to be the result of a frantic desire to use every possible inch of country, and I say that, in the interests of posterity, we cannot afford to do this.

I refer also to the Government's policy on land development. Some time ago I asked the Minister a series of questions relative to development of land on what is known as the Sun Coast. Having answered the questions, the Minister made available for my perusal a map of the area showing the various parcels of subdivision in the development. In his answer he told me that one of the provisions of the agreement with the companies concerned was that the Crown was to receive 10 per cent. of the price of all land sold.

Although I think a very good case could be argued for the freeholding of home sites, I believe that this method of parcelling land out to subdividers and paying them a commission on all land sold is doing two things: adding to the cost of the land, and increasing subsequent valuations. If one looks at the figures, one finds that in six years the Country-Liberal Government has made 6,298 allotments of Crown land available to the public for purchase; in the same period, 6,884 acres of land have been handed out to subdividers for subdivision. Working on the assumption of each allotment being 24 perches, and with reasonably easy terms of subdivision giving four allotments to the acre, it appears that the Crown has handed 27,536 building allotments to subdividers for sale.

The Minister will argue that one of the reasons why land is given to subdividers is that the Government has not the money needed to finance developmental work for subdivisions. Surely this is not money lost for all time and is merely an advance against future sales of land. Land is handed over to subdividers in return for certain road works, bridge works, and so on, and the Minister said that in this instance—I am not concerned particularly with this instance; I am saying that this is a common feature of all land subdivisions—under the terms of the development lease the company concerned was granted the right to subdivide and sell allotments in an area of about 1,665 acres. However, he could not tell me what amount of developmental work the company had done on roads and bridges, and he admitted quite frankly in his answer to my questions that he had no idea how much money the company had spent on this development. He said, "The amount spent by the two companies on the construction of their respective sections is not known."

As I say, this land could have been subdivided and made available by the Government. The necessary road works

could have been carried out by the Government because any money expended in that direction would merely have been a loan against future sales of the land. If this had been done, and taking into account the fact that the Government is to receive 10 per cent. of future sales in the area, we would have saved the public 10 per cent., and subsequent valuations would have been based on a figure 10 per cent. less than these allotments will bring today.

I feel that the subdivision of Crown land can best be handled by direct sales to the public through the Land Administration Commission. There is evidence that this could be done. The mere fact that the Land Administration Commission has, without any apparent difficulty, over the period I mentioned been able to dispose of 6,298 building allotments, proves that this can be done successfully by a Government department.

Now, in the few minutes left to me, I want to deal with small parcels of Crown land sought by various organisations in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Low: If the subdivision of the land you mentioned had been left to the Government, it would have remained there for 30 to 50 years as is.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The hon. member for Cooroora says that had it been left to the Government this land would have remained undeveloped for 30 to 50 years. I agree wholeheartedly with him, if it had been left to this Government.

Mr. Low: As a matter of fact, the Australian Labor Party Government turned the proposal down.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not want to go back to that, because I have other matters to deal with.

Mr. Low: The Crown Land Development Act was the best Act ever put on the Statute Book in this Parliament.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: That is only the opinion of the hon. member for Cooroora. I will not agree that it is a good Act if it adds 10 per cent. in fees, or 10 per cent. to the price of land to the public. It is not a good Act if it means that future valuations in this area will be affected by the fact that the Government is getting 10 per cent. when it could have been selling land at a cheaper price because it was the subdivider.

However, as I say, I want to speak on other matters contained in these Estimates. One such matter relates to various small parcels of land that are normally Crown land or have some particular tie-in with the Crown—there are very many in the metropolitan area—and that become the subject of applications by various organisations such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, St. John's Ambulance and other worthy organisations which apply for portions of such land on

which to erect headquarters, or a den, or some such thing. It is normal for this land to be handed over to the trusteeship of the local authority, in this case the Brisbane City Council. I have had several of these proposals in recent times and it would appear that there is considerable delay in finalising the transfer of this type of land to the Brisbane City Council. This can cause a considerable amount of heart-burning on the part of the organisation concerned.

In no sense am I being critical of any departmental officers. Whenever I have had to call on the advice and help of officers of the Land Administration Commission or other departmental officers I have been met with courtesy and a desire to expedite matters as much as possible. However, it would seem that there is a staff shortage in the Survey Office, particularly in the cartographic branch which does a tremendous amount of work on the preparation of plans covering various alterations to areas, and so on.

The Minister might well look to a means of attracting young people to the Survey Office for training as survey draftsmen, etc. I do not want to buy into this matter too deeply, but one thing that seems to deter many young people is the outmoded system of training, particularly for cartographers. I understand that this is being revised, and therefore I do not want to become too involved in the matter. I understand that negotiations are presently going on, and that the matter is presently under discussion by the various interested parties. I am not blaming anybody. It seems to have been a legacy from the war years when it took two years to qualify in certain subjects in the course for draftsmen, whereas now the qualifications can be obtained in one year.

(Time expired.)

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (9.18 p.m.): It is my intention to mention certain dealings with Crown land in the metropolitan area and on the islands off the foreshore. Sometimes it is very difficult to understand the quick decisions given by the department concerning Crown land.

First of all, let me deal with an area of 5 acres of land in the Broadwater Road Queensland Housing Commission estate. Since 1952 or earlier this land has been lying idle. When I became the member for Belmont approaches were made to me to endeavour to obtain the land for a sporting body. When I took the matter up with the Brisbane City Council I was referred back to the Queensland Housing Commission. When the matter was taken up with the Treasurer, who was also Minister for Housing at the time, he was quite sympathetic to the proposal and said that as far as his department was concerned the sooner this idle land was used for a specific purpose and was an added attraction to the area, the better. Then right out of the blue, the

Department of Lands stepped in and said that because it was set aside for park purposes it should be used for nothing other than park purposes. If the Department of Lands has this authority—and no doubt it has so far as Crown lands are concerned—it has the final say.

Mr. Hiley: But park lands are regularly used for the conduct of sport.

Mr. NEWTON: That was the decision given in this case. They were trying to keep it for recreational purposes.

Mr. Hiley: Park lands are regularly used for the conduct of sport.

Mr. NEWTON: I am stating the reason that was given in this case. I have all the correspondence on the matter. The sporting body was finally told that the land was set aside for park purposes and it could not be used for recreation purposes. That may have applied for a number of years, so far as the council was concerned, but that policy is being departed from now. Purely recreational grounds in the metropolitan area are being established, and other lands are being provided for park purposes. I have raised this matter because I am amazed at the decisions made relative to Crown land in the metropolitan area.

I pass now to another matter, and I am glad to see the Minister for Mines in the Chamber. For months representations have been made about what is happening at Moreton Island. The people generally have protested strongly about the Government's action relative to Moreton Island. Somewhere along the line Cabinet decided to confuse the issue. It may be that one Minister does not know what the other one is doing. Firstly, the Department of Lands, knowing quite well that it could dispose of land on Moreton Island, sold Crown land for residential purposes. It had no trouble at all in selling it. Then a mining company came in and grabbed more than 600 acres of the island. What happened after that? The case was put clearly before the Minister for Mines and the Minister for Lands. I give the Minister for Lands credit in that he at least sent somebody from his department to try to do something about the protests made by these people.

Mr. Camm: Three officials from my department went over and looked into it.

Mr. NEWTON: There is a lot more behind this, especially when we read what appears in today's "Telegraph". There is no doubt that a decision was made long before now, irrespective of all the protests or anything else relative to this matter. What happened next? The New South Wales Rutile Mining Company went ahead, even before it applied for a lease of part of the island, and outlaid a great deal of capital to provide jetties, including one on the Cleveland side, to where it could run barges and

trucks. All this was done before any move was made to tie up the 500-acre lease the company wanted in the first place.

It is no wonder that we see the decision that appears in today's "Telegraph". The simple fact is that irrespective of what has happened so far, if the Minister for Lands is to be consistent he should have the final say in this matter. If he has not the final say, let us hope that he will make sure that Crown land on Moreton Island is protected. There are a number of islands in Moreton Bay. The Government has tried to lease Peel Island, but no-one will take it. Nobody will take it even as a tourist resort. Somebody was after a lease for grazing purposes. I do not know whether or not that application has been granted.

Moreton Island is valuable to the people of this State and to the Government. It can be made a great tourist attraction. Anybody who has had anything to do with the land knows that once the virgin state of sand is disturbed, nothing remains but a desert. Many people have asked me what will be put back in place of what is taken, but whatever it is, it will not bring the land back to its natural state.

Mr. Camm: What about Broadbeach?

Mr. NEWTON: The Minister should go down and have a look at it. I did recently. Nobody can tell me it looks as attractive as it did before it was disturbed. Once our foreshores are interfered with, nothing but a desert will remain. That is what happened at Broadbeach. The same will happen on the islands close to the metropolitan area.

I appeal to the Minister for Lands, who has adopted a reasonable attitude in this matter up to date, to make sure that consideration is given to the matters I have raised on behalf of those who have purchased building sites, that is, that there be a protection zone around the sites, and no spoiling of the natural layout or interference with the beaches or fishing grounds. There is no doubt that the company has done pretty well. It is waiting now for the Minister for Lands to approve of the lease of 260 acres so that it can go ahead and tear the island apart.

Mr. Camm: I approved of it this afternoon.

Mr. NEWTON: That's how quick these things can happen. We should have a good look at these things.

A good deal has been said about industrial land. I am pleased that the Minister for Industrial Development is in the Chamber. Certain terms and conditions have been laid down by the Department of Lands relative to industrial land. In a case brought to my attention recently a certain firm at the Hamilton obtained a lease and carried out its terms and conditions, which are pretty

good when one sees what has to be done in 12 months. This firm applied for a second area and got it. It carried out the terms and conditions. Because of expansion in its industry it is after a third area, but it is not in a position to carry out the terms and conditions at the moment. As this firm has brought industry to the metropolitan area, the Department of Lands should be a little more lenient.

The Treasurer, the Minister for Industrial Development, and the Minister for Lands have had a good deal to do with industrial development in the metropolitan area, particularly where land has been resumed. No doubt they would claim that there are more people wanting sites than there are sites available. That could be so. I was down at the Hamilton today for a couple of hours with the hon. member for Nundah. It is best to have these things looked at by one member from each side of the Chamber. There is no doubt that this area is quickly filling up.

Mr. Dewar: Do you know if this firm has been to the Department of Industrial Development?

Mr. NEWTON: In all fairness, I must say that they have. The assurance that I was given is that things seem to be working out quite favourably at this juncture. I do not propose to name the firm. I do say, in fairness to the Minister, that they have been to his department and they are quite satisfied with the treatment they have received. However, I point out again that the Department of Lands lays down certain conditions. This must present problems to the Minister for Lands. After all, his is a difficult portfolio and he cannot afford to get off-side with too many of his ministerial colleagues in these matters.

Mr. Dewar: I can assure you that if my department sponsors it the Department of Lands does not knock it back.

Mr. NEWTON: Let us hope that that will be the position.

Mr. Dewar: That is the position.

Mr. NEWTON: The Department of Lands requires certain conditions to be carried out and a certain amount spent. I understand that within 12 months of acquiring a site a certain amount of money has to be spent on it under the terms of the lease.

Mr. Lloyd: They have already spent a lot of money on it.

Mr. NEWTON: That is true. This firm has spent over £30,000 and it employs more than 50 people. There is no doubt that it has carried out its obligations to the best of its ability, and will further expand.

Mr. Hiley: Are they themselves conducting the industry?

Mr. NEWTON: Yes. They are not only conducting the industry but are expanding. They have already gone to Bundaberg, and they are going to Gladstone. They are looking for a site there, and I believe they have obtained one from the Gladstone Harbour Board. They are a rapidly expanding organisation.

Quite a lot of land right throughout the State is being sold by the Department of Lands. If allotments are put up for auction and not sold, they can be purchased afterwards provided the reserve price asked at the auction is paid. Land has recently been opened near the cemetery at Southport, and people interested in it have made approaches to me. For various reasons, they do not want to indicate the purpose for which they want the land. After all, if Crown land is being made available and people get to know the intention of a prospective purchaser, often the whole project can be spoilt for him. One gentleman was interested in a piece of land at Southport. He was told by the Department of Lands that the land had not yet been put up for sale and that when it was he would have to go along and compete with others who may be interested in it. Then, if it was not sold, he would have the alternative of purchasing it through those who were acting on behalf of the department in the sale.

I have raised these matters because it will give the Minister a chance to indicate to hon. members on this side of the Chamber, and to hon. members generally, what the policy of his department is relative to industrial and residential sites. There has been a good deal of reference to brigalow lands and to land matters generally in western and central areas; but in my opinion the questions that I have raised are very important and I ask the Minister to reply to them.

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Deputy Premier) (9.36 p.m.): If I may have your indulgence, Mr. Hooper, I should like to inform hon. members that a discussion has taken place as to whether it would be suitable to close the debate now. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has indicated to me that the Opposition does not desire to put forward any more speakers and that it will be satisfied if the Minister closes the debate now. I have discussed the matter quickly with the Minister for Lands and he has told me that he would like to reply to several of the matters that have been raised. If it is acceptable to the Opposition, he is prepared to reply briefly on the morning of the resumption of the Committee, thus closing the debate on the Estimates for the Department of Lands. The Committee would then proceed to consider the next Estimates.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.39 p.m.